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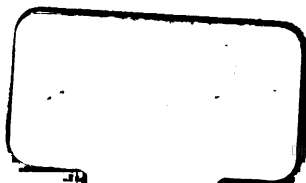
Vara: or, The child of adoption
[by J.E. Hornblower].

Jane Elizabeth Hornblower, *Vara*



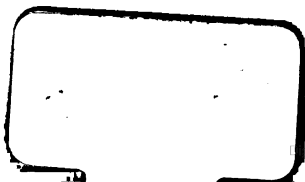


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VARA:

OR,

THE CHILD OF ADOPTION.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET AND CO., BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCLIV.

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C. E. Johns, Printer,
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" Thus have I sought to grace a serious lay
With many a wild, indeed, but flowery spray,
In hopes to gain, what else I have lost,
The attention pleasure has so much engross'd.
But if unhappily deceived I dream,
And prove too weak for so divine a theme,
Let Charity forgive me a mistake,
That zeal, not vanity, has chanced to make ;
And spare the poet for his subject's sake."

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VARA;

OR,

THE CHILD OF ADOPTION.

I.

Home Scenes.

“ Hither turn
Thy graceful footsteps : hither, gentle maid,
Incline thy polished forehead : let thy eyes
Effuse the mildness of their azure dawn ;
And may the fanning breezes waft aside
Thy radiant locks ; disclosing as it bends
With airy softness from the marble neck,
The cheek fair-blooming, and the rosy lips,
Where winning smiles and pleasures sweet as love,
With sanctity and wisdom, tempering blend
Their soft allurements.”

“ VARA, VARA !—where is the child ! Vara, Vara !” and the name echoed along the shore till it was lost in the voices of the winds and of the waves which murmured around the beautiful island.

Come this way, friend ; stop not to admire the stately cocoa-nut that waves its feather-like top above you ; follow this purling rivulet, and now clamber these moss-grown rocks,—see how they are piled in huge and broken masses, stretching out into the bosom of the lake-like waters which encircle this Pacific island, and separates it from yon girdling reef that rears its ragged breast against the billows of the surging ocean. Approach the extreme point carefully, for the footing is treacherous, and look down, and there some fifteen feet below you behold the little Vara ! She sits at the foot of the rock, peering over into placid waters, which reflect her sweet childish face ; the deep blue eyes look up to you from the azure depths, and the floating brown curls seem to twine about the coral flowers that bloom upon the

B

bottom of the lake. And now that she catches a glimpse in the liquid mirror of yonder bird, she turns upward her face to watch its flight,—and such a face as is seldom seen in childhood, and never in later years. The tracery of the veins in the temples through the transparent skin; the gentlest bloom that lies upon the cheek, and comes and goes with every emotion; the mouth—yet untouched by care, unmelting into the beauty of riper years, unsealed by the habit of decision—the mouth of a child that can either pout or smile amid the dimples on the cheek; together with the classic outlines of the face—blend in the beauty of that countenance. But of all the features in Vara's face, the eyes are most remarkable. From their silent depths shoot gleams of thought beyond her years, and, it would seem, the shaded lashes drooped of purpose, to close from vulgar sight a world of feeling.

The dress of little Vara is fanciful and fairy-like. A sleeveless skirt of white cambric, slightly gathered about the waist, reaches to the knees, and is most delicately embroidered about the neck and hem, in imitation of the pea-green sea-weed. Cambric pantalets, similarly embroidered, fall about the high prunella boots, which, clumsy as they are, are a needful protection to the tiny foot that wanders so recklessly over the rough rocks.

Little Vara—to return to our story—was too busy to heed the voice that called her. The bottom of the lagoon was covered with corals of every shape and colour, growing in the richest profusion and distinctly visible through the pellucid water, presenting the appearance of a flower-garden blooming with tropical luxuriance, through which you could trace intersecting walks laid out in shrubbery, terminating in pretty bowers, curiously wrought, of the tortuous branches of the madrepora, while, to add to the fantastic effect, the zebra fish and fish of every size and hue gambolled about; now hiding under the wide-spreading leaves of some pigmy plantain, and then darting in and out, chasing each other about the crooked trunk of some twisted bananas. Little Vara's fancy was busy, discovering resemblances to all sorts of flowers, and fruits, and trees, while her tongue chided the fish, as they hid some pretty piece of coral

from sight, or coaxed them nearer when they rose to the surface.

Tired at length of her idle sport, she raised her eyes till they rested on the opposite reef. The long-rolling waves of the ocean, violently driven against this precipitous barrier, broke upon its top in sparkling showers of spray; and *there*, this afternoon, emblazoned on the quivering sheet, shone more brightly and distinctly than Vara had ever seen it, the gloriously painted bow of Heaven :

“ And where the eddy waters curled,
The sunbeam gave its golden tinge,
And set with gems the wavelet's fringe,
Uprising as the breeze swept by;
While light, with water blended,
Reflected from the arching sky
The bow of promise bended !”

Vara thought of the bow that first bent over Ararat; she remembered how pleasant it was in the rainy season, when the flood-gates of the sky were opened, to know that God had promised never again to drown the world, and that this bow was the pledge of that promise; then she wondered if the wings of angels were so beautiful as those dewy colours, and the bright smile faded, and a tear quivered in her eye, for she thought of the baby-sister whom angels had carried in their bosoms far away from the beautiful island.

“ Vara, Vara.” “ Rutea,” answered the child,—at last hearing the voice,—and bounding up the rocks, she ran to meet her friend, who now advanced, and, in the native tongue, chided her for playing truant and wandering so far alone. Rutea, daughter of a chief, was a beautiful maiden of fourteen. Her long black hair fell in glossy braids down her back. A wreath of bright-coloured flowers, intermingled with variegated leaves, encircled her head; a necklace of berries; bracelets of glass beads; and a mat of the softest texture and brightest colours, bound about the waist and reaching to the knees, completed her simple wardrobe. Her dark complexion; black hair; large black, dreamy, though somewhat stupid eyes, and rounded form, were in perfect contrast to the fragile, pale, spiritual little Vara.

“ I have been wishing for you, Rutea, to tell me some wild story of the ancient days.”

"Nay, child," answered the maiden, with an air of sadness, "I cannot tell you stories now,—perhaps never again,—but your father waits for you, Vara, and bids you hasten home." Rutea suddenly stood still, and heeded not the questions of Vara as to what her father wished; but seemed struggling with some uncontrollable emotion. At last, with passionate violence, she tore from her neck the string of shining berries, and bound them twice around the arm of Vara. She muttered, as she did so, words which Vara's limited knowledge of the language did not comprehend. She grew more calm. "Vara," she said at last, "my grandam told me, that whoever wore this charmed bracelet would love the giver; perhaps it is so; but whether so or not, promise me that you will always wear this bracelet, and that, as often as you look upon it, you will think with love on me and on my race; promise me, Vara, promise me," exclaimed the maiden, with increasing vehemence, impatient at the continued silence of the little girl, who was frightened by her impetuosity.

"Why, Rutea," she said at length, "I think the berries very pretty, and would like to wear them for their own sakes, and I am sure I shall always love you and yours, whether I wear this bracelet or not; and I do promise you I will never part with it, *if*," she added with truthful simplicity, "if I can help it, Rutea."

The island maiden caught the child in her arms, pressed her wildly to her bosom for one moment, then throwing the long braids of her hair over her face, she sprang away with a scream and a bound, and was soon lost to sight in a neighbouring grove of bread-fruit trees.

Vara, frightened as she was at the abruptness and singularity of her manner, could not but be amused at the fantastic appearance of the flying Rutea. Left alone, she hastened homeward.

In one of those quiet enclosures in which the Missionaries of the Pacific Islands like to cluster their dwellings, stood a one-story house, elevated three or four steps above the ground, its thatch-work roof projecting on every side over a verandah, the balustrade of which was formed of curiously woven bamboos. The whole was embosomed in the graceful

foliage of young bananas, while at some distance in the rear towered the lofty summits of full-grown cocoa-nuts and bread-fruit trees. In front was an extensive flower-garden, gorgeous in the prodigal luxuriance of the tropics, and separated by a slight wicket fence from the rest of the mission premises. The house was divided into four spacious rooms, each communicating by doors with the piazza both front and back. In one of these rooms, easily recognised as a study by shelves, which occupied every convenient space, and were crowded with books, idols, and curiosities, the Missionary and his wife had held that day a sad conference.

"Oh, Alfred," the wife exclaimed, "can we, can we bear this parting? To send her away, to put an ocean between us, to know the probability that we shall never see her again on earth; that if she lives she may not be able to rejoin us here, and should she die, we shall not be near her to direct her to the Saviour, and soothe the hours of suffering—this is dreadful; and yet worse still, we send her to entire strangers, who may have few sympathies with us or with our dear sensitive Vara,—who may never understand her—who, through mere ignorance, or want of refinement, may make her life wretched, or who may impress upon her a character so different from what she would receive with us, that all harmony of thought, sentiment, and purpose—between her parents and herself—may be completely destroyed. This—this is fearful! I could bear her death better, than that separation of heart and interests, when the intellectual and moral affinities are wanting. I have prayed—prayed to be resigned—prayed to be grateful. I thought I had conquered myself, but"—a flood of tears prevented the conclusion of the sentence.

The husband, hardly less overcome, pressed her to his bosom, and in silence mingled his tears with hers. Again and again he essayed to speak in vain. At length, with gentle violence, he put his wife aside, and fell upon his knees; she sunk beside him, and there they wept long in silent prayer. At length came audible words—words at first half spoken—then sentences broken, with sobs of agony—then more collected utterances of the believing soul, till the voice grew calm, and strong, and eloquent, and the pro-

mises of a covenant-keeping God were not only implored but realized. They rose from their knees at the very moment that little Vara's footsteps were heard upon the verandah. The mother, not daring to trust herself in the approaching interview, glided from the room by one door, as the child entered by another.

"Man was made
For the stern conflict. In a mother's love
There is more tenderness; the thousand chords,
Woven with every fibre of her heart,
Complain, like delicate harp-strings, at a breath;
But love in man is one deep principle,
Which, like a root grown in a rifted rock,
Abides the tempest."

Mary Granger, left early an orphan, became the charge of an excellent aunt, who died just as her niece entered womanhood. She then became a member of the family of her nearest relative and guardian, a cousin of her father's, and there was initiated into fashionable life in the city of New York. The attentions paid to the beautiful, elegant, and accomplished heiress, were little gratifying to her tastes. At the house of her pastor she made the acquaintance of Alfred Austen, who had devoted himself to a project, then deemed romantic by some, fanatical by many. To the surprise of the world of fashion, Mary Granger became the wife of the enthusiastic missionary. She had well considered the undertaking, and she believed herself to be willing and prepared to encounter every hardship, and endure every privation which she might incur. But there was one sacrifice she did not foresee. She, who had never known what it was to have a mother, could not estimate the suffering of separation from a daughter.

For twelve years the missionaries had laboured in the ocean island, and with great success. Of three children born to them, the second only, the little Vara, survived the period of infancy. She was now entering her tenth year. Soon after they left the United States, the news followed them of the entire loss of Mrs. Austen's fortune, through the depreciation of stocks and other causes which she hardly understood, and, indeed, as she supposed the loss irreparable,

did not care to investigate. From this time they were wholly dependent on the meagre salary of the missionary. Happy in the work in which she was engaged, she had never regretted leaving her native land, and until now had hardly deplored the loss of property. Now, indeed, she felt the severity of that misfortune. How was the little Vata to be educated? How was she to be provided for in the way of worldly maintenance? What was to become of her—should they die, and the missionary's salary cease? They could not educate her there. They dreaded the effect on her character of the evil influences of that half-civilized island. They could provide her with no means of earning a future support. Besides, her health failed, she needed the more bracing air of the northern hemisphere. Something must be done to accomplish this object. They had no relatives to whom they could entrust her. The former guardian of Mrs. Austen and his family had long since ceased to correspond with one in whose tastes they did not sympathize, and whom they had always censured for what they regarded as a foolish marriage. Mr. Austen, like his wife, was early left an orphan. He had few near relatives, and they were not in circumstances to assume the charge he would have wished to commit to them. Only one expedient suggested itself. Modestly and most reluctantly an intimation was conveyed in the annual report of the mission—of a wish to provide a home and education for this beloved child. It was done under an imperative sense of duty. In their hearts they wished—they hoped—it would meet with no response: then, with a good conscience, they might keep their treasure to themselves, and leave the result to the God of Providence. It was not to be so.

The last arrival brought a letter from a Mr. John Stephens, of the town of Liberty, in the State of New York, offering, in kind and Christian terms, to adopt the child, and promising, in the name of his wife and himself, to bring her up, and provide for her as a child of their own. Accompanying testimonials approved their ability, respectability, and piety. The tone, however, of the letter, and the anxious parents were not insensible to it, indicated, that however able and pious Mr. Stephens might be, he either wanted

refinement of feeling, or did not appreciate the sacrifice which they were called upon to make.

But the die was cast. Another vessel was to sail for New York in a week. One of the missionaries and his wife were to return in it. The opportunity was not to be lost. Vara must go.

II.

Claude and Rainbows.

"And yet, fair bow, no fabling dreams,
 But words of the Most High,
 Have told why first thy robe of beams
 Was woven in the sky.

How glorious is thy girdle cast
 O'er mountain, tower, and town,
 Or, mirror'd in the ocean vast,
 A thousand furlongs down!

For, faithful to its sacred page,
 Heaven still rebuilds thy span,
 Nor lets the type grow pale with age
 That first spoke peace to man."

THE unhappy parents strove to conceal from their child the deep anguish and dark forebodings with which they regarded the approaching separation. In her presence they spake cheerfully and hopefully. Fortunately the necessary preparations aided the mother in avoiding exposure of her real feelings.

In that secluded home, untrammelled by the modes and fashions of artificial society, the mother had indulged her own fanciful and elegant taste in the arrangements of Vara's dress. Her husband encouraged her in gratifying a harmless pleasure—when so little of a refined nature was to be enjoyed; and often the fond parents studied together the artistic effect of some article of the child's simple wardrobe with a keener interest and delight than a stranger could have understood. The quick ingenuity and skilful hand of the mother wrought out of scanty materials an elegant wardrobe. Vara sometimes was arrayed in the light drapery in which we have already seen her, like a little nymph risen from the coral grotto of the placid lake; again she was attired as a

child of the azure skies, and then again, decked in all the gorgeous hues of the tropic flowers, she seemed the youngest child of the Southern Flora.

This innocent source of pleasure, that had so often quickened her thoughts and varied the monotony of her daily toil, was now to come to an end. The mother sighed as she examined garment after garment, and saw how unfit they were for the new home, where her little girl must conform to the established and often tyrannical habits of the world. She needed clothes, too, of greater warmth for the long voyage, than any she possessed. It required no little contrivance, on the part of the mother, and no little industry, to supply the deficiency. Old garments of her own, stored away as useless in that sunny land, were brought to light, and mind and hands were busily employed day and night.

The father, too, was occupied. Remitting his usual avocations, leaving the schools to the sole conduct of the assistants, permitting even the printing-press to stand idle, he esteemed it to be both his duty and his privilege, to devote this last week to the assistance of his wife and companionship of his daughter. It was a suggestion of Vara's, which he cordially adopted, that he should sketch all the familiar scenes in that island-home, that she might ever retain them in vivid recollection. He had a talent for drawing, which had been well cultivated, though long disused. As these attempts progressed, something of enthusiasm for the art returned. In this pleasant occupation, in the constant prattling of his child, whom he now learned to appreciate and love better than he ever had done, and in the long rambles which they took together in search of localities which had some interest in past associations, or in their own intrinsic beauty, the father was beguiled from the sad thoughts which at times overwhelmed him.

During the whole of this memorable week, Rutea kept herself out of sight. Yet wherever Vara went, a pair of large, black, dreaming eyes glimmered upon her through the bamboo lattice of the verandah, from behind the wicket fence of the garden, between the leaves of the clustering vines in the untrimmed woods, down from the topmost height of some lofty tree, or round the corner of a rock by

the sea-shore. Once or twice the native maiden crossed her path, hesitated at her call, and then ran away with all the speed of a stricken deer.

As for Vara herself, she often forgot, child-like, in present pleasure the coming trial. Her fits of thoughtfulness were more frequent than usual and more intense. Sometimes she was found bathed in tears. But she soon perceived that the evidences of sorrow in herself produced the keenest anguish in her parents, and, with a thoughtfulness and unselfishness peculiar to her nature, she would dry her own eyes, kiss the tears from the cheeks of her parents, and almost talk them into the belief that she longed to go to her new home, to enjoy the novelties which she was there to discover. On the whole, Vara spent a pleasant week. She was interested in her mother's work, delighted with the constant society of her dear father, gratified with the degree of importance which was attached to herself, and pleased, it must be confessed, with the prospect of a visit to that country, of which she had heard so much and dreamed so often.

It was the last day. Vara was intently engaged embroidering a book-mark, to be left in the family Bible, a last remembrancer of herself to her dear father and mother. The design was her own suggestion, though she was indebted to her mother for the method of executing it. It consisted of a rainbow, resting on a coral reef, encircling the name of Vara. "For," said she, "just as the bow in the spray of the breakers comes and goes, now bright, now dim, fading almost away, and just as you think it is really gone, shining out more beautifully than ever, so, dear father and mother, will be your thoughts of me,—they will come and go,—when you are busy perhaps you will almost forget me, yet even in your busiest moments there will be a little, a tiny glimmering of me in your thoughts—and then, all of a sudden you know, something will flash over your mind, and you will forget everything else in thinking about your own dear Vara!" and the little girl laughed at the pleasantness of her own conceit. Then she added more gravely,

"I have another reason for preferring the bow to any other device; because, you know, it is the bow of promise.

Father, did you not say that the bow was made of drops of water?"

"Yes."

"And did you not tell me that the bow was the seal of a—what do you call it, father?"

"The seal of a covenant, do you mean?"

"Oh, yes,—that's it. The seal of a covenant. And you told me that baptism was the seal of a covenant too. Now I am not sure, father, that I know just what you mean by the seal of a covenant, unless it is just—"

"Just what, little one?"

"Why—just a—well, you see this bracelet, father?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, I promised Rutea that I would wear this bracelet always, and, as often as I looked at it, would think with love of her and of her race. Now, father, what I wish to know is, if this bracelet is a seal of a covenant between Rutea and me?"

"Yes, my child, to all intents and purposes it is."

The face of Vara shone with delight as she triumphantly exclaimed: "Well, then, dear father and mother, as often as you look at this bow, or at the real bow down on the reef, you must fancy that the bow of promise is made of the waters of baptism, and that it is the seal of God's covenant with you, the covenant of baptism you know, it is the promise of God I mean, to love me and be a Father to me, and to bring us all together again."

If Vara had not had so many reasons for her choice, the device, though difficult of execution, was pretty enough in itself to warrant the choice. With this device, Vara was busy on the morning referred to, when she suddenly broke the silence with a startling question.

"Father," and she emphasized every word, and stamped her little foot at almost every utterance, "do you suppose that Mr. John Stephens and his wife will ever dare to make me call them father and mother?"

The father bent down his head over his work,—he was shading the belfry of the little school-house, which just showed itself beyond the trees. In after years Vara often traced in those trembling lines the struggle in that father's

heart. The mother turned on Vara one thrilling look—a look she never forgot—and gathering up her work hastily, disappeared through the open door. It was a full half hour before she returned. What she did, what she suffered in that brief interval, is known only to a prayer-hearing God. But Vara observed that from that time she was more calm, and even cheerful than she had been before.

The child, in her excitement, had dropped her work and risen from her chair. For a moment after her mother left, she stood erect in an attitude of defiance. But finding no encouragement from her father's silence, she passionately exclaimed, throwing her arms, as she did so, about her father's neck, and clinging there with convulsive energy—"I never can have,—I never will have—any other father and mother;—I will try to love, honour, and obey them, as you have bid me do, but I will never call them father and mother,—need I,—need I, father?"

Now came the bitterness of the trial; the struggle between the sense of duty and the instinct of love. He was required by his own act to place another in that relation to his only child which he alone should fill. He buried up his face in the clustering ringlets of the child and prayed for strength. His was a trial like that of the father of the faithful, when commanded to offer up his only son a sacrifice to God; and the God of Abraham gave him strength to conquer the pleadings of his own rebellious heart. The conflict was passed; and he answered firmly, yet sadly—

"Your father and mother, Vara daughter, will always be *your own* father and mother; and you will love them better than you love that father and mother whom God has given you in America. Yet you must dearly love your new father and mother, and call them by any name that they desire. Never, my dear child, speak of them again so disrespectfully as you did just now, nor let them suspect that you are unwilling to have them for your father and mother. Promise me this, Vara. I know I can trust your word: Promise me that you will never let them discover any reluctance on your part to regard them as your father and mother."

The sad, earnest tone of her father's voice soothed her agitated mind. Self-willed by nature, she had been early taught, not merely obedience to the positive commands, but cheerful acquiescence in the wishes of her parents. For the first time in her life she hesitated to accede to a request of her father. She had returned to her seat. Her face was flushed. Her eye fixed on vacancy. She maintained a sullen silence, and looked the picture of moody obstinacy. In the same calm, sad voice, her father spoke again—

"It may cost you a struggle, dear little girl, but it is a duty which the Saviour will help you to perform. Those excellent persons are to be at the trouble of taking care of you, and are disposed to love you as a daughter. It is proper that you should treat them as your parents. It cannot be harder for you to regard them as your parents, than it is for your own father and mother to give you to them to be their daughter. It would grieve us both still more if you should not repay their kindness with a daughter's love and duty. For our sakes, then, Vara, promise me that you will never give these excellent persons reason to suspect that you do not look upon them as your father and mother."

The voice was so sorrowful, so imploring, she could not refuse. Her arms were once more around her father's neck, and she whispered in his ear what she could not speak aloud, "I promise that I will not, if I can help it," and she burst into tears.

Those words, which he himself had extorted from his reluctant child, were strangely painful to the father. It seemed at that moment as if the first wave of the ocean that was to separate them, had rolled in between his child and himself.

"But," added Vara, still sobbing on his shoulder, "I will always after this call you and dear mamma my *own* father and mother. They shall be, for your sakes, my American father and mother, but you shall be *my own* father and mother."

These words seemed to bring the child back again to him. By a singular association of thought, the rainbow on the reef was suggested to his mind. The emblematic

bow had almost faded out of sight, and then had appeared again as beautiful as ever. Yes, God had sealed the relation—they still were, and only could be, her *own* father and mother.

That afternoon the bell of the mission chapel called together the members of the Christian community to attend a parting conference.

The floor of the church was strewed, or rather packed, with the native converts. During the solemn services there were few dry eyes in the whole assembly; and whenever the simple natives glanced at the little Vara, their universal pet and favourite, there were such bursts of noisy lamentation as threatened more than once to bring the meeting to an abrupt and disorderly determination. Opposite Vara sat Rutea. Her long unbraided hair was thrown over her face, and wholly concealed it, except the large black eyes, which never averted their gaze from the face of Vara. Yet she neither wept, nor groaned, nor moved.

The concluding prayer was offered by a native catechist. It was in these words,—“O God, tell the winds about them that they may not blow fiercely upon them; command the ocean concerning them that it may not swallow them up; conduct them in safety to their far-distant country, and give them a happy meeting with their relatives, and then conduct them back again to us; but should we never meet again below, may we all meet around the throne of glory above.* And, oh, Heavenly Father, bless the little flower we commit to the waves; may its fragrance abide in our memories when we can no longer look on its beauty; and if it should never bloom again in our midst, transplant it to Thy Paradise, to abide in everlasting beauty.”

The services were ended with singing the animated stanzas, rudely translated into the native tongue:—

“Come, Christian brethren, ere we part,
Join every voice and every heart:
One solemn hymn to God we raise,
One final song of grateful praise.

* The first part of this prayer was actually offered, on a similar occasion, by a South Sea Islander. See “Missionary Enterprise in the South Sea Islands.”

"Christians, we here may meet no more;
But there is yet a happier shore;
And there, released from toil and pain,
Dear brethren, we shall meet again."

Amidst the sobs that drowned the words of the benediction, pronounced by the departing missionary, her mother, taking the hand of Vara, stole out from the chapel by a side-door, and walked quickly to the concealment of a neighbouring grave, fearing to subject the delicate child to the wild and tumultuous leave-taking of the excitable natives. They walked on till they came to the enclosure in which rested the mortal remains of those of the mission family whom God had taken to Himself. Vara picked a flower from the grave of little Willie, whom she had never seen, and another from that of the sweet baby Josephine, whom she could just recollect, to carry with her as remembrancers to her new home. Her mother in the meantime seated herself on one of the little graves, and Vara, having secured her relics, took her seat on the other, and laid her curly head on her mother's lap, looking up into that sorrowful face with unutterable love.

"Vara," said her mother, after a silence of some moments, "you are about to go from me: you are too young to understand how much a daughter loses when she loses the immediate care of an own mother. But I trust that we shall meet again, here, upon this island, and that you will come back to me all that a mother could wish to find you. It is my desire, and your father's, though we would not trammel you with any pledge, that you should return to your native island, and devote the talents God has given you to the work in which we are now engaged, happily to ourselves, and usefully we trust to these poor people. It is a great, a difficult, a laborious work, and those need high qualifications who can engage in it with pleasure and success. Above all, they need to be free from worldliness of mind. Remember this, and try to prepare yourself for the life of a missionary. But this is a matter which cannot be decided upon now. There is one passage of Scripture, however, which I would associate with this subject, and with this hour and this

place, in your mind, and may it prove the happy motto of your life—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." If you should return to me in this land, Vara, come back to me pure in heart, or come not at all. And should you never return to this island, Vara, be sure and meet me, pure in heart, with these little innocents, whose bodies sleep in these graves, to enjoy for ever the beatific vision of God."

The mother had spoken beyond the comprehension of an ordinary child. But Vara was no ordinary child. Joyous of heart, as ever child was, there was, as we have before remarked, a strange thoughtfulness in her character, and now her every faculty was quickened by the approaching hour of separation. Her mind was rapidly developing in that new school of discipline to which this week had introduced her. With one hand clasped between both of mother's, with the other she pointed to the rainbow on the reef.

"Remember, mother," she said, "you have put the seal of the covenant on me. I am His. And the promise is to children's children. Oh, how glad I am that God has given me pious parents to follow me with their prayers, and plead for me His promises, wherever I go."

"Do not forget, daughter, that there is only one Intercessor, and to Him you must go for yourself."

"I do not forget, mother," and impressing one fond kiss on her mother's lips, and receiving a hundred in return, they rose and walked hand-in-hand for the last time to the mission home.

They had taken but a few steps, when, happening to glance back, they saw Rutea seated on the grave from which Vara had just risen. The head of the heathen maiden was cast down for a single moment, and in that moment Vara had bounded back to her side and encircled her neck with her arms.

"Naughty, naughty Rutea, not to come and see her little birdie the last week, before she leaves her island-home perhaps for ever.

"Why should the birdie take wing and fly away? The broad ocean is no place for such a little fledgling. The

teacher-father does not love the birdie, or he would not drive her from the nest. The teacher loves not the ocean people, or he would spare them this little birdie to sing to them the songs of Zion. The little birdie's songs would do more good than all the teacher's talking."

This singular heathen girl, under the influence of a grandmother whom she passionately loved, had resisted all the efforts of the missionaries. Though taught to read and write, she obstinately clung to her idols, and refused to submit her faith to the doctrines of Christ. But Vara could win her way where argument and authority were powerless. Rutea loved her with the passion peculiar to her nature. Already the artless piety of the child had conciliated the prejudices of the heathen, and Vara's parents permitted an intimacy, which they might otherwise have disallowed, in the hope that Rutea might thus be brought within the Christian fold.

Vara answered her now, half in pity, half in indignation. "Wicked Rutea to talk so; father does love me, and you too, and all the people. He would not send me away if he could help it."

"Would you then like to stay with us?"

"Yes, indeed. Oh, nothing, nothing would tempt me to leave my dear island-home if I could stay. Oh, Rutea, how I have cried, and cried, and cried, when nobody saw me; and I have longed for you that I might have somebody to tell all I thought and felt. I could not tell *them*, for I knew the worse I felt, the worse they felt. Oh, Rutea, they are more unhappy in parting with me than even I am in leaving them, if that *can* be."

The maiden's black eyes danced with delight. "Vara," she replied, "I know an eagle that can bear the little birdie to yonder mountain, and then the birdie can live with Rutea and the eagle, safe and happy, and never, never leave her beautiful island-home." And as she spoke, she seized the child's hand and wildly pointed to the mountain, as if she would have her fly on the instant.

Vara snatched away her hand, with an expression on her countenance of mingled impatience and disdain. Rutea glanced at the bracelet: she took hold of it, and felt it to see

if it was securely fastened on the arm, and assured of this she sank upon the grave and hid her face between her knees. Her charm had failed. She had believed that the bracelet would so bind the heart of Vara to herself, that she might lead her where she pleased. She had actually meditated carrying her away to the interior of the island, where none could trace her way, but those who yet practice the secret mysteries of idolatry, and who would suffer death before they would discover the place of retreat. She had been watching for the opportunity to execute her design all the week. Her heathen lover stood near to obey her commands. This was the first time she had found Vara alone. Never had she permitted the thought to pass through her mind that the charm might fail. It was sanctified by every rite known to her religion. She believed in it as firmly as she believed in the gods of wood and stone she worshipped. But it did fail, and the amazement and distress of the poor heathen girl were beyond description.

One moment she sat with her head between her knees, stupid with disappointment; then she threw herself on the ground, and gave vent to her passion in a frantic outcry of vexation, anger, and grief. Vara kneeled down beside her, and with words that only a child can speak to untutored sorrow, soothed her into calmness. Once it flashed across the mind of Rutea, that she might seize Vara and carry her off by force. She sprang to her feet; but either despair of accomplishing her purpose against the will of the child, or the sincerity of her love as she looked upon that trustful countenance, prevented the outrage, and she sank back again upon the ground, and gave way to moans and tears, and at length lapsed into a state of sullen silence.

When she was quiet, Vara slipped into her hand a little pocket Testament in the native tongue. "See, Rutea," she said, "keep this and read it every day, for my sake, as I wear this," pointing to the bracelet, "for yours; and, dear, good Rutea, whenever you see yonder rainbow on the reef, take it as the promise of the true God, that I shall come back again some day, to teach your race the way to heaven."

Rutea looked up dolefully into Vara's face, and answered more solemnly and deliberately than the little girl had ever

heard her speak. "Vara, my grandam was kind to me, and I believed her. The white men, who come here in big ships, are wicked, and I would not learn religion of such as they are. They are worse than pagans. They destroy our race;" and her eye flashed with indignation. "But, Vara," she continued, "the greatest idol has no power against your God. That bracelet was blessed at my father's bloody altar; but your father's God is stronger than mine. I will read this book. Perhaps it will make me good. And, Vara, every day when you say 'Our Father,' pray for Rutea, and pray for Rutea's eagle, and pray that we may all fly away from this wicked world and find rest at last in the heavenly Paradise."

"I will, I will, Rutea: I love you more now than ever I did: I feel sure now we shall meet together, in heaven, if not on earth: farewell! and, Rutea, every day—mind—*every day*—say 'Our Father' as I taught you: farewell."

Vara gave her one long, melting kiss, then ran away to join her mother, who, impatient at the long delay, had returned and stood near enough to witness the last part of this strange interview.

As they entered the grove that shut in on one side this retired cemetery, they both turned to look at Rutea. There she stood upon the little grave, and the rainbow on the reef circled round her form. She raised her hand to Heaven, and in the deep silence they distinctly heard her words: "O God," she said, "if God there be; O God whom Vara calls her heavenly Father, bless my little birdie, speed her flight safely over the wide ocean, and when her feathers are grown and her pinions are strong, may she come back to build her nest in this island-home."

Her hand fell: her head drooped: she turned and walked slowly away. But Vara and her mother never forgot her words or her appearance, as she stood within the circle of the rainbow on the reef, and looked and spoke as a beautiful sibyl, inspired with the spirit of her native isle.

III.

Partings and Sorrowings.

"I go from the haunts where the blue billows roll,
But that isle and those waters shall live in my soul."

"Our sometime darling, whom we prized
As a stray gift by bounteous Heaven dismiss'd
From some bright sphere which sorrow may not cloud,
To make the happy happier! Is *she* sent
To grapple with the miseries of this time,
Whose nature such ethereal aspect wears
As it would perish at the touch of wrong?"

"So we're to have a minister, a missionary to boot, for a fellow-passenger," said a wild-looking fellow who lolled on the deck of the *Oriental*, and who, from his dress, might be judged half sailor and half landsman, holding as he did the rather mongrel position of super-cargo.

"So I hear," answered his companion; a clerk of a mercantile house, returning, after five or six years of dissipation, to the United States: "and I wish, for my part, the natives had made cold clergyman of him, before he took passage in this ship: I never knew any luck with a parson or a white horse on board."

"Look here, chaps," cried the captain, "you'll just please to say nothing against your betters in my presence."

"Our betters!" rejoined the clerk. "I should like to know, captain, if you are jesting, or if you are such a confounded fool as to believe in missionaries. Missionaries, I guess, aint no better than the rest of us sinners. I took the trouble yesterday to look in upon their establishment, and, blame me, if I wouldn't like to live with them. They take it easy, I'm thinking; they make the poor savages wait on them, and spend the spare cash of them that send them here, to make themselves comfortable. I've been here one whole

week this day, and I've seen no fruits of their religion yet. The natives are a far sight more wicked than any we saw on that island we discovered when we put in for water. The men will sell their souls for liquor, and as for the women, why they meet you more than half way. Now, captain, I just want to know if you do really believe in these missionaries."

"I don't know much about the missionaries, nor, for the matter of that, I don't know much about any good folks whatsoever. I've associated too much with them of your kind, and I hope some of these days to ship your acquaintance, I do. But I tell you what I do know: I know that my mother was a good woman, she was; and she believed in ministers, and most especially in missionaries. She would pray for them with all her heart and soul, she would; and I won't speak disrespectful of ministers or missionaries, so long as I remember my mother. They're welcome to sail in my ship, they are; and if we go down together, I might drown in worse company nor theirs. And now look here, you chaps, you please remember and treat this black coat gentleman respectful like, so long as he and you are 'board the Oriental, and I am her captain."

A boat containing the baggage of the expected passengers now drew up alongside, and was soon followed by two more boats containing the passengers themselves. The Rev. John Johnson, a tall, spare and stiff gentleman, first appeared upon the deck, leading a pale and sickly-looking wife. He bowed solemnly to the young men, and passed down into the cabin. He meant to be very polite; he certainly was sincere. But his air and manner left an unpleasant impression upon all three, captain, supercargo, and clerk. Throughout the whole voyage, though they treated him with every mark of respect, they gave him a wide berth. Had he not been so closely confined to the state-room of his sick wife, they would have learned that, notwithstanding his sanctimonious demeanor, he was a good and pure-hearted man, full of human sympathies, which had so long been directed to one object, the conversion of the heathen, that they could hardly exhibit themselves in any other form.

When Alfred Austen stepped upon the deck, there was

that in his open, frank countenance, and truly gentlemanly carriage, which at once interested the young men in his favour. The wife of the missionary, still elegant and beautiful, deepened this impression. But when the captain deposited carefully on the deck our little heroine, the lovely burden in his rough arms, the young men could not have been more astonished if a fairy had dropped down from the sky, or rather if a sea nymph had sprung up from the waves,—for she was arrayed at her own request, in the favourite dress in which we first made her acquaintance.

The captivating strangers paused upon the deck only so long as civility seemed to require, and then hastened to the cabin to make the necessary preparations for the comfort of the passengers. Much was to be done that required both ingenuity and industry. A hundred little knick-knacks in the shape of medicines, cordials, dainties and conveniences, were to be stowed away in the smallest possible compass, where they could be easily found, and where they could neither do nor receive injury. They had not completed all the contrivances to promote the comfort of the voyagers, when word came from the captain that the ship was under canvass, and that Mr. and Mrs. Austen must leave immediately, or they would be carried over the bar, where it would be dangerous for small boats to follow them. The first messenger had hardly delivered his message, when a second came to bid them hasten. Thus summoned, there was only time for one kiss, one convulsive embrace, and father and mother sped up the companion-way, closely followed by Vara, who saw them hurried by the captain over the vessel's side and into their little boat. All passed in such haste, that the pain of the last parting was hardly felt; and those who had eyes to observe, might have detected on the weather-beaten face of the captain a smile of self-complacency, which seemed to say that in his own estimation he had just accomplished something equally cute and kind.

Mr. Johnson took Vara's hand and led her to a place at the side of the vessel, where she would be out of the way, and could watch her parents as long as they were in sight. Their little boat disappeared behind the reef, just as the noble ship ploughed its course over the bar, and

began to rock and roll on the long sweeping billows of the Pacific Ocean. The next minute Vara's eye was caught by two figures, standing upon the highest point of the reef, where it rose far above the reach of the dashing breakers. The tall figure of a native youth, the effect of his uncommon height increased by a tiara of eagles' feathers that stood erect above his head, their very tips only bending to the passing breeze, stood out in bold relief against the clear blue sky of the southern hemisphere, looking like the giant genius of that ocean island. Beside him knelt Rutea, one hand clasped the little Testament to her bosom, the other pointed upward, and on her head fluttered the feathers of the bird of paradise, the emblem which she herself had chosen for the little Vara. Vara waved her hand in recognition, kissed the bracelet on her arm, and clasped her hands above her head, and pointed to the spot where at that time of day the rainbow on the reef was visible.

None could long beguile her thoughts from her dear father and mother. A fearful suspicion that she had seen the last of them had barely crossed her mind, when they too made their appearance on the reef, though not at such an adventurous height as Rutea and her eagle. In the happiness of seeing them once more, Vara forgot that each minute was separating them from her further and further. In that clear atmosphere objects are visible at a great distance, and for one hour Vara continued to watch these beloved friends till they grew to be but specks upon the distant horizon. She dashed away the tears that would ever gather in her eyes, she strained every nerve to keep down her choking feelings, that she might see them to the last. But the speck-like forms grew fainter and fainter, till they faded away among the snow-white breakers that foamed upon the reef. Just as Vara had wiped her eyes for one more effort to look out on the fast-receding prospect, Captain Marvin approached her with the long spy-glass in his hand, and asked her if she would like to see something pretty. Before Vara could answer, if she had cared to answer, the captain placed the spy-glass to her eye, and adjusting it with nautical skill, brought the objects of her

dearest earthly love once more before her vision. The wonder-stricken child saw, as distinctly as if they were but a few rods distant, those beloved forms : the eagle was bending over the prostrate Rutea, and her own dear father was supporting in his arms that precious mother : they were leaving the scene : even while she looked, they turned the corner of a projecting rock : in vain she called, she entreated them to stay ; the little voice died in one long wail on the waves of the ocean, the glass fell from the trembling hands, and Vara, comfortless and almost lifeless, was borne in the strong arms of the kind captain to her berth in the cabin.

* * * *

That night, on the page of a tear-blotted journal, the mother wrote these words—

“‘My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.’ Let me be grateful to God for the aids of his grace in a trial which, without Divine support, must have deprived me either of reason or of life. Two children have I committed to the grave. Twice have I said, with a breaking heart indeed, and yet with a sweet composure of mind, ‘The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ I had thought the death of a child the severest loss, the deepest sorrow that could befall a mother. I am now astonished at myself for thinking so. Forgive me, O Heavenly Father, that I did not rejoice in Thy taking them to Thyself, before this heavier calamity could befall them and me ! Dear Willie, dear Josephine, you are safe, you are happy, you are not lost to me. I have done wrong to mourn for you. It is Vara who is lost, it is my living child for whom I must mourn. To carry your little bodies to the grave was sorrowful ; but what was that to thrusting a living, loving daughter from my home and presence ? To submit to the will of God, when it was His sovereign pleasure to take you from me, cost me a painful struggle with my wicked heart ; but what was that to this voluntary extinction of the life and joy of my soul ? To restore you to God, to commit my dear lambs to the bosom of the Good Shepherd, to give you up, even when I knew that holy angels and

the spirits of the just would watch over you in the Paradise of God, needed all the faith and fortitude which the promises of the Gospel could afford me! How then could I ever consent to bestow my daughter, my Vara, to the guardianship of strangers, whose qualifications for the charge I do not know, who may have bad hearts, or, if good, may not understand or appreciate the character of my child, or sympathize with her tastes and feelings,—or who, if they do all this, if they are wise and holy, refined and affectionate, never can be to her what her mother would have been, never can so cheerfully perform the duties of a mother, never can so rejoice in the pleasures of a mother. How have I consented to renounce my privileges! How could I have deprived my daughter of her birthright! Perhaps it was wrong. Vara, should your eye ever read these words, and if you should ever, ever in your life, indulge for one minute a reproachful thought against the mother who permitted you to be torn from her arms, then learn, my dear child, that your mother would have suffered less, if she had laid your lifeless body in the grave beside your little sister. My only support, the only reason why I do not now lay down and die, is the supporting sense of God's love, and implicit confidence in the covenant promise. There is one Parent from whom you cannot be separated. Your Heavenly Father is with you. He will watch over you, bless you, comfort you. Blessed be His name! Thy will, O God, be done."

IV.

New Sights and New Faces.

"Sensitive mimosa, shrinking from the winds, that
 help to root the fir,
 Fragile nautilus, shipwrecked in the gale, wherest
 the conch is glad."

THE Oriental lay at her moorings in the New York dock. Such a scene of confusion bewildered Vara, as she had never even dreamed of. Trunks, boxes and bales of goods strewed the decks. Men running, working, swearing, shouting; ropes creaking; sailors singing in measure as they hoisted goods from the hold and let them down, with a swing of the derrick and a turn of the windlass, on the wharf; carts rumbling; horses crowded into incredible positions; distant bells ringing; and a far-off hum, continuous and loud as the roar of an ocean, yet so unlike the familiar voice of the long-surfing Pacific, that Vara thought the Atlantic sung a very strange song.

Vara watched the baggage of the passengers as it disappeared on the wharf, and seemed to her as irrecoverably lost,—as if it had been thrown into the sea. And when her own trunk followed the fate of the others, and was swallowed up from her straining eyes in the vortex of confusion, her heart sunk within her. Mr. Johnson hurried about in the most mysterious manner, backward and forward, so far as Vara could see for no earthly object, from the vessel to the wharf, and from the wharf again to the vessel, from the cabin to the deck, and from the deck again to the cabin.

At length Mrs. Johnson emerged from the cabin, leaning on the arm of her husband, and both disappeared over the side of the vessel. Vara had just begun to think that she

had been forgotten and deserted by her friends, and was fancying to herself how pleasant it would be to stay in the vessel with the kind old captain, and sail with him all over the world, and perhaps surprise her father and mother with an unexpected return to her island-home,—when her dreams were rudely dispersed by the voice of Mr. Johnson, who, with that tone of impatience that even the gentlest man assumes when all the responsibilities of baggage, family and hack-men are upon him, bade her hasten to accompany him to his waiting wife. Vara flew to the captain. Busy as he was, he deliberately paused to throw away the stump of a segar, that had ornamented his mouth for the last hour, drew the back of his rough hand over his eyes, stooped down and kissed her marble brow, and began to say something about his mother's blessing—but Mr. Johnson was calling, and before he had finished, Vara was gone. The loud good-bye of the clerk and supercargo were answered only with a little nod of her little head; and with nimble steps, and a palpitating heart, she threaded her way through the crowd, clinging tightly to the hand of her protector, till she found herself comfortably ensconced in the corner of a carriage, shut in with her friends from the noisy hubbub around them.

All was new—everything wonderful. The carriage, the horses, the streets, the houses, the people, the—everything that met her gaze—look where she would. Her head throbbed with excitement, and her heart with fear. The carriage was soon exchanged for a steamboat; and Vara trembled with amazement as the great monster, without sails, ploughed through the water, shaking and shivering from stem to stern with the ponderous jar of the machinery. She was too agitated to speak or stir. She nestled as close to Mrs. Johnson as she could; and when at last the sound of the machinery ceased, the boat glided smoothly into its pier, and the passengers began to rush over the plank, she had scarcely strength to totter along by the side of her friends to the depôt, where they were to take the cara. Vara had heard of steam-boats, and rail-roads, and locomotives, but was surprised to find how different all were from what she had imagined. The noise, and motion, and

speed of the cars were at first terrifying; but by little and little she became accustomed to them. The beautiful country through which they passed diverted her thoughts from apprehensions of danger. She saw once more the appareling of nature—grass, trees, flowers, birds, mountains, houses, men. All indeed new and strange; and once and awhile she saw a mountain torrent, or a full bosomed river. The least speck of water was hailed as a familiar memento of her island-home. She was at last truly enjoying the journey, and wishing that it might not soon come to its dreaded end—when, with a whistle and a scream, the engine rushed under the projecting portico of a large depôt, and the conductor opening the door of the car, pronounced, in a stentorian voice, the one ominous word, "Liberty!"

Vara was hurried out of the cars and into an omnibus, and again out of the omnibus into an hotel, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, alive only to the conviction that she breathed the air of her new home, and that at any moment the hitherto mythical personages, as they had seemed to her, Mr. and Mrs. John Stephens, might start forth before her in the forms of actual humanity, and claim her for their own. Unaccountable as it may appear, she now for the first time puzzled herself with the attempt to imagine what kind of persons these Mr. and Mrs. John Stephens might be. Up to this moment they had had but an indistinctive place in her thoughts, as the two individuals who were to occupy to her the relation of father and mother: beyond this her heart had been too much occupied with the images of her own father and mother, and the grief of leaving her island-home, to give them any further consideration. But now she first felt that the character of these unknown persons was a matter of vast importance. She suffered the intensest anxiety to ascertain what they might be, and yet dreaded the moment that was to assure her hopes or confirm her fears. "I wonder," she thought to herself, "if they are very different from my own dear father and mother: they cannot be so good—no, indeed, they can't; but if they are even a little like them, I could love them easier than if they were *very* different. I hope they are not so very pious as Mrs. Johnson. She seems so much more pious than mother is. She is so particular,

and she does so frighten me, when she tells me what I ought to do, and how I ought to feel, when I am in my new home. Oh, I do hope they are not exactly like her. I am afraid I shall never please them if they are; and if I love them, they can't love such a wicked little girl as I am. Perhaps Mr. Stephens is a funny man, like the old captain. I'd rather he would be like the captain, than like that supercargo, who always would be tying my shoe, or picking up my book. Oh, dear, what if they should be!" and so she went on comparing them with everybody she had ever seen or heard of—each time thinking of some person whom they might resemble, and whom she would less wish to have them resemble than any one she had thought of before, till at last she had prepared herself to find in Mr. and Mrs. John Stephens the most unloveable, disagreeable, and dreadful man and woman in the whole world, and she was proportionably unhappy.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson had stopped at Liberty on their way to their friends in Ohio, for the purpose of putting Vara under the charge of her new parents. They were to leave by an early train in the afternoon. Vara was to dine with them at the hotel, and then Mr. Johnson was to go with her to Mr. Stephens'. They arrived at the hotel just as a most unmusical bell rung forth the summons to dinner. It was little that Vara could eat. She was oblivious to all around her, though there was much to observe that was new to her; her mind was pre-occupied with the approaching moment—into which her happiness or misery for life was concentrated. When the dinner was over, and Mrs. Johnson was comfortably stretched on a sofa in the public parlour, and in a very demure voice and very precise language had issued her last exhortation to Vara to be grateful and obedient to her new parents, Vara took Mr. Johnson's hand, to be led passively along to her new home, with very much the feelings she would have had if assured that she was to be shut up for life in a cage with two such persons as the pious, lecturing, and exemplary Mrs. Johnson.

In the dustiest street of a busy brick-built town, in a two and a half story house with basement, without a tree to shade it from the burning July sun, without a particle

of green in sight to relieve the eye, except the extravagantly green window blinds that formed a striking contrast with fiery red bricks, dwelt Mr. John Stephens. The bell was rung; the tramping of heavy boots was heard; the door was jerked open with such force that it struck the side wall of the narrow entry and rebounded again, making the little girl start with fear, and would indeed have slammed too in their faces, if it had not been prevented by the foot of the young gentleman who had performed the manœuvre, and who now stood chuckling to himself in the open doorway, his legs spread apart to the widest extent, as much as to say, "though the door is open, I am here, and you cannot enter without my permission." If he had been an invincible obstacle to their ingress, Vara would not have regretted it. There was certainly nothing in his appearance to excite a wish for more intimate acquaintance. He had yellow hair; and his yellow hair was curiously compacted into three great locks, standing straight out from his head, one over his forehead, like a unicorn's horn, and two over his ears like an ox's horns. The whites of his pale blue eyes were yellow, perhaps from the reflection of his hair, and bulged out into immense size. His cheeks were a burning red. His nose was small. His mouth was well enough for the reception of food, and was fully supplied with a set of immense yellow masticators. His figure was broad and thickly set. More conspicuous than any other feature, were his ears; "those exterior twin appendages, hanging ornaments, and (architecturally speaking) handsome volutes to the human capital," as Charles Lamb calls them, not only in Daniel's case, were composed of a large extent of skin and muscle, but had a singular aversion to the head on which they grew, and stood straight out from it in the same direction with and parallel to the pomatumed yellow side-locks of his hair. He was dressed in a suit of yellow nankeen, with a shining patent-leather stock about his neck, over which protruded a wide expanse of stiffly starched shirt-collar, in a style that bid defiance to the fitness which ought to reign in all things. One glance at the boy satisfied Vara's curiosity, and she involuntarily looked away in search of some more pleasing object. Her eye rested on a small red box, sus-

pended against the wall, on which was inscribed in large ornamental gilt letters, two words, "Foreign Missions."

"Is Mr. Stephens at home?" asked Mr. Johnson.

"No, sir," was the ready answer, "you'll find him at his store in Black-street. Shall I show you the way there, or do you know it?"

"Thank you. Is Mrs. Stephens in?"

"Yes," with a look of some surprise; "is it *her* you would like to see?"

"I would."

"Walk in, sir, I will call her," and observing Vara's eyes fixed on the little red box, he said to her, as he showed them into the room, "you'd better stop admiring that box, or all your cash will tingle in it, if mother sees you but look at it."

The word "mother" made Vara start with a new apprehension; and while she is lost in thought, attempting to solve a difficult point of casuistry, whether her promise to her own father, that her new parents should never suspect, if she could help it, any reluctance on her part to regard them as such, bound her to adopt on the same terms all their kith and kin—let us inspect the appearance of the parlour into which they had been ushered.

It was small; not more than fifteen feet square. It was comfortably furnished, and yet the furniture looked as if it had no business there. The carpet was of too large a pattern to display itself to advantage within the contracted space to which it was confined by four square yellow walls, which walls were adorned by two wretched oil portraits in two splendid gilt frames, the portraits being too mean, and the frames too handsome to agree with any thing else in the room. The mahogany chairs, covered with figured hair-cloth, though of a most approved pattern, looked clumsy and crowded, because of the smallness of the room, so did the sofa, and so did the big rocking chair; but what was most remarkable to a stranger's eye, was the number of crochet-worked tidies which decorated these articles of furniture, each chair had at least one, the rocking chair had two, and the sofa was honoured with three; of what use or beauty they could be on new and glossy hair-cloth, she who put them there could best tell, at least

she could tell, if she would, that Mrs. Stephens had spent a whole winter working these very tidies for a fair in behalf of Foreign Missions, and when the said fair passed off and left the tidies unsold, Mrs. Stephens herself, most benevolently, for the sake of the cause, at an extravagant price purchased them all; and spread them out thus lavishly upon every article in her little parlour that could possibly receive such a decoration. Besides the portraits, which hung one on either side of the door, there was a large engraving over the mantel-piece framed in gilt, depicting the massacre of Captain Cook. Between the windows hung an engraving, doubtless cut out of a souvenir, of a young lady in black silk, under which was printed the descriptive title, "The Missionary's Daughter." This was appropriately framed in black walnut, as were also four engraved certificates, two on either side of the chimney, which respectively testified that John Stephens, Esq., Mrs. Marcia Ann Stephens, Master Daniel Stephens, and little Annie Stephens, '*deceased*,' was constituted an honorary member of the —— Board of Foreign Missions, by the donation of thirty dollars.

Before Mr. Johnson had completed his survey of the room, or Vara had recovered from her brown study, Mrs. Stephens entered. Timidly Vara raised her eyes, to look—not upon the terrible being which her imagination had conjured up—but on as mild, sensible, and animated a countenance as ever beamed with kindness towards a dear little girl. Perhaps the surprise, for time had hardly elapsed for the receipt and answer of her husband's letter, drew from Mrs. Stephens more expression of affectionate welcome, than even her ardent nature would otherwise have bestowed. That welcome dispersed all Vara's fears. If Mrs. Stephens had been a princess, arrayed in silk and velvet, instead of the very neat calico dress and white apron she wore, Vara could not have felt more at home in her lap, nor returned her kisses more joyfully.

Daniel, who was now tamed down into soberness, by the discovery that this was his new sister, and stood eyeing her with a scrutiny in which curiosity seemed gradually to lose itself in indifference, was despatched to the store in Black Street, to communicate the intelligence of the arrival to Mr.

D

Stephens. That gentleman soon appeared—a small spare man, betraying a nervous excitement which seemed to be the product of a desire to do the kind and polite thing, and of a consciousness that he did not know exactly how to do it. He shook hands with Mr. Johnson, kissed Vara, and began making a speech, the purport of which seemed to be, that he hoped Vara would be a good girl and give her mother no trouble. But he sat down before he was quite through the sentence, and forgot to finish it, and left Mrs. Stephens to do and say whatever else was to be said or done.

Mr. Johnson had no time to lose. At his request Mr. Stephens and Daniel and Vara accompanied him to the hotel, and thence with his wife to the dépôt; and almost before Vara knew that the cars had come and gone, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were speeding away to dear relatives and friends in the far-west, and she—a lonely exile—solitary among strangers, was weeping without friend or comforter, on the platform of the dépôt.

Mr. Stephens was in a quandary. It was very inconvenient to be absent longer from his store; and very annoying to have the care of a crying child. He tried the only method of soothing the sobbing child of which his inventive genius was capable. First of all, he tried the effect of a kiss, adding, with a tone that was meant to be very effective, "there, child, don't cry." But his kiss had no magic in it, and his words no healing. She only cried the harder. He repeated the experiment once or twice with no better success. He was driven to the last resource,—one which he had always found efficacious with Daniel—forcing into Vara's hand something which Daniel would have called "cash," though to Vara its current value was unknown, and its intrinsic worth not half so much as that of a single grain of sand from the shore of her native island. he bade Daniel show her the way to the candy shop. "There, my dear," he said, patting her on the head, "I must go to my store now—go with Daniel, my daughter." Vara's ear caught that word, and she did wince a little; but Mr. Stephens did not know it—he turned away with a complacent conscience, not doubting the efficacy of sugar candies to cure the aching of a child's heart.

As for Daniel, delighted with his charge, he dragged Vara unresistingly on, descanting eloquently upon two rival shops; "and now," said he, pausing at a corner, where two streets intersected each other, "to which shall we go? Say quick; one is down yonder, and one is up there." But Vara was silent, though she had ceased crying; her thoughts were far away, and she had not understood a word he had been saying to her.

"You, girl, you, why don't you speak? Where will you go, I say?"

The rudeness of his manner at any other time, would have alarmed her. Now, she was insensible to fear. His question suggested only one idea, and unconsciously and abstractedly she answered, "Home!"

"Home? home?" said the boy. "If you go home, mother'll put all your cash into the missionary box; precious little candy you'll get for it. But," he added, perceiving how very sad she looked, "do you really wish to go home?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I do."

"Well, come along then," and with that he started forward with the impatient manner of a cross boy.

When Vara saw how completely she was misunderstood, the sense of her desolateness burst upon her from a new point of view. A flood of tears was the consequence. For this Daniel was wholly unprepared; and he gave vent to his annoyance. "Well, now, if girls ar'n't the most provokingest things that ever were. You never know what they want. Now what's the use of your blubbering here in the street? Can't you stop crying, I say, till you get home?"

The fact was, Daniel felt sorry for the girl. Blunt as his perceptions were, even he saw that a little girl who had left her father and mother in a distant country, had just parted with the last friends she had, and was for the first time alone among strangers, had some reason to cry. The tear drops in fact were gathering in his own eyes. He was ashamed to wipe them off: he was more ashamed to let them roll down his cheeks, and he could not wink them away. If there is anything more mortifying to a foolish boy than anything else, it is to be discovered shedding tears over a case of real

distress. A boy may cry with anger, cry with pain, cry with joy, but let him take care how he cries in sympathy with a little crying girl! This was a risk which Daniel dared not venture! He could not consent so to humble his mistaken pride. They were now in sight of the house; and turning impatiently to Vara, he said, "Look here, you just go straight ahead, and after you cross two streets, the third brick house on this side is ours. You can't miss it. Go straight ahead. The third brick house after you cross two streets." Confident that so plain a direction could not be misunderstood by a girl of her size and intelligence, he darted off and was out of sight before she could speak.

A child who has lived all her days in an island of the Pacific Ocean, has much to learn before she is familiar with the most common objects we meet in our streets. As for Vara, if an albatross had caught her up from her island-home and dropped her in the streets of the town of Liberty, she could not have been more completely bewildered. That day she had for the first time set foot on the American continent, from that hour to this she had been in a continual whirl, passing in rapid succession from the crowded thoroughfares of New York, to the jarring steamboat, the rushing railroad, the confusion of a hotel, the excitement of introduction to a new home, and now, distracted as she was with grief at the final separation from her missionary friends, of course her mind was not very clear to the comprehension of Daniel's direction. The moment after she turned to pursue Daniel in his abrupt flight, she lost all recollection of the direction in which they had been walking before he left her. She could not tell which way was "straight ahead." She was not quite sure that she had the right idea of what was meant by a *street*, and as for brick, though she had seen piles on piles of brick houses that very day, she knew not that they were brick; even the wooden houses puzzled her, and she knew not under the concealment of paint and the novelty of form, that they were wooden.

But Vara had a world of energy in her little bosom; and she determined to go on and examine all the houses in the town, hoping to recognize Mr. Stephens' house when she once saw it. Of course she started in the wrong direction, and as

everything she met was a source of alarm, her progress was slow. Every horse that passed her in the street, though she was on the sidewalk, made her tremble. She lost much time at the crossings, waiting for the road to be free from all possible danger. Even a lumbering country wagon seemed to her a slothful monster, which at any moment might screech out and dash off at lightning speed, like the locomotive which brought her to the town of Liberty. Fear and excitement alone nerved her with strength to persevere. She carefully examined every house, but saw none which bore the least resemblance to the one she sought. As she went on the street grew wider and more quiet; the houses were larger and farther apart; little strips of green lay between them, large trees hung over them, flowers bloomed in the doorways, and the voices of happy children were heard at play on the nicely gravelled walks. In spite of her distressed situation, she began to feel more light-hearted as she inhaled the fresh air and caught glimpses of that nature which she had loved so fervently from her infancy. Before the open gateway of a house that was farther back from the street than any she had passed, stood a negro. Vara had seen savages, but never had seen one so dreadful to look upon as that jet black face; and the nude figures of the savages were less terrible to her who had been accustomed to them, than the dirty tatters of that negro's dress. Her very fear impelled her to speak to him, lest he might be angry, as savages were if you seemed to avoid them. As all who were not white men, whom she had heretofore met, spoke the native language of her island-home, she now, either in simplicity or by force of habit, addressed the negro in that tongue, desiring him to show her the way to Mr. Stephens'. The ebony face gazed upon her a moment in stupid wonder, then throwing his head back and kicking up his shins in front, as only a real negro can, he broke out into a loud yaw, yaw, yaw! displaying a set of glistening ivories in his red jaws, which at once suggested to Vara the suspicion that he might be a cannibal. Yes, she saw the very blood upon his teeth. Petrified with horror, she neither moved nor spoke, till the negro bent forward to inspect her more closely, when, supposing he was about to pounce upon her, she gave

one scream and fled through the open gate towards the house. A large Newfoundland dog heard her cry, caught sight of her fluttering dress, and at once gave chase, barking loudly at this hasty invasion of his master's grounds. She doubted not he was a lion. Her strength forsook her; already she felt the warm breath of the gigantic monster on her cheek; and she fell senseless on the grass.

Pleasant dreams floated through her mind. She lay upon the coral reef where last she saw her own dear parents. She felt the spray of the breakers fall upon her brow. The soft hand of her mother smoothed her curls. Then she was in Paradise. She lay upon a bank of crimson poppies. The ground was strewn with flowers; the air was filled with fragrance; waving clouds softened the rosy light; angel faces beamed in love upon her, and gentle voices whispered music around her. By degrees her consciousness more fully returned. She was lying on a couch covered with a rich and highly coloured material. Rose-coloured curtains shaded the large bay-window. The room was full of some delicious perfume. A soft hand bathed her forehead, and a beautiful face bent over hers with tenderest solicitude. Where she was, or how she came there, she could not tell. She closed her eyes, and tried to think. She retraced the history of the day—one by one she recalled each event that had occurred since her disembarkation in the morning; and when at last she came to the rencontre with the cannibal and the lion, she shuddered. Then came the doubt—whether she was on earth or in heaven; whether the lion had killed her, or whether she was alive and in human hands,—or whether, after all, she might not be dreaming. She dared not open her eyes again, lest all should vanish, or lest the dreadful reality that she was even now in the lion's clutches should come back. Unable to endure the suspense, yet keeping her eyes shut, lest she should see some fearful sight, she softly murmured: "Oh, speak, if any body is with me, if I am safe,—please speak to me?"

"My sweet child," answered a voice like music, "you are safe: we are with you."

"Where is the lion? Is it gone?"

"The lion, child? the dog you mean; he would not hurt you."

"Was that a dog? Will not dogs hurt?"

"No, sweet one; our Towser would not hurt you."

"Are you sure I shall not see him, if I open my eyes?"

"Yes; I promise you, you will not."

"And am I on earth, or are you—an angel?"

"Open your eyes, little girl, and look at me, and see for yourself what I am," said the same gentle voice, but in a more natural and assuring tone.

Timidly the child opened her eyes and looked up, and saw as beautiful a face as was ever animated with love and sympathy.

"Please let me sit in your lap."

The request was at once gratified, and the little girl, with her head on that bosom, and her arms round that lovely neck, grew more calm and like herself. By degrees the lady learned enough from the answers to the few simple questions she put, to know that Mr. John Stephens was the rightful protector of the little girl, and her prudence restrained her curiosity from seeking to learn more then. She persuaded the child to take some refreshment, and as the evening had begun to fall, she ordered her carriage, and carried the child in her own lap to her new home, and left her there, with the advice that she should be put at once to bed, and be kept quiet, till her nervous system had recovered from the fatigue and excitement of this eventful day.

Great had been the consternation at the Stephens' when Daniel returned late in the afternoon without his little charge. The whole family had been out in search. Daniel himself was in great distress of mind, though he chose to hide it under loud invectives against the stupidity and uselessness of girls in general, and of Vara in particular; but even he could not help evincing his delight, by sundry awkward antics, when the lost one appeared, and was safely ensconced in the clean little bed in the little front room over the entry, which had been devoted to her own sole use and occupancy.

While Vara slept away her fright and fatigue, young voices and gay music were wafted through the trees and shrubbery from the open windows of the mansion where she had been treated with so much kindness by sweet Adele Boyle.

"Charlie," said that young lady to her brother, "I must tell you of a charming adventure. I have had a visit to-day from a little fairy. It is well that you were not home, or you would never love mortal woman again, no, not even 'Tilly Granger herself."

"Perhaps the fairy would care as little for your compliment," answered her brother, "as probably Miss Matilda does." A little flush passed over his cheek, and Miss 'Tilly found it very necessary to complete the destruction, petal by petal, of a poor blushing rose.

"But who is this fairy?" echoed half a dozen voices.

"Oh, she was a little fairy, wafted by this pleasant summer breeze from a beautiful island in the Pacific Ocean, and fell exhausted in the very middle of our grass plot; and I picked her up, and she came to life again in my arms, and smiled upon me with eyes of the deepest blue that were ever stolen from the violets."

"No fairy could have chosen a fairer bosom in which to nestle," whispered a sentimental youth; "doubtless she mistook it for a white rose."

"And the dear little thing thought she was in Paradise, and took me for an angel."

"A pardonable error," said the sentimental youth.

"Rather a strange one for a fairy to make," said the piquant Miss Catharine Grainger.

"There now, Kate, if you are so personal in your sarcasms, I'll tell you no more about this pretty Pacific Islander."

"Oh la! I suppose it is some missionary brat, a protégée of Mrs. John Stephens like enough, whom Adele has found, and with her usual love of romance, has made a fairy of. Was that impertinent red box tied round her neck? or was she neatly labelled, like the picture in Mrs. Stephens' parlour, 'the Missionary's Daughter?'"

"Well! you are not far from the truth, Kate, though you need not be so caustic. She is the child of a missionary, whom Mrs. Stephens has adopted. She only arrived this day in our country, and with the speed of steam winged her flight to our town; and she is the most perfectly beautiful child I ever saw in my life. The little thing seems hardly

to belong to this world, for everything is so charmingly new to her. She took black Jim for a cannibal, and our Towser for a lion, and trying to run from them, with Towser in full chase, she fell and fainted on our grass plot. So I was hardly indebted to my imagination for a single fact, when I said she was a little fairy, wafted by a southern breeze from a beautiful island in the Pacific that fell exhausted on our grass plot, and came to life in my arms."

"I never saw a missionary's child yet," said Kate, "that was not as brown, or as sallow, or as black as the heathen themselves."

"I tell you what, Kate Granger," said Adele, bridling, "your own fair skin is not so purely white, nor the rose upon your cheek so softly delicate, as that of my little Vara."

"Thank you, Miss Boyle," answered Kate, "you certainly compliment me which ever way I take your meaning."

"What did you say her name was?" asked Charles Boyle.

"Vara,—Vara Austen."

"Why, Kate," said the boyish voice of young Granger, "is not that the name of the missionary whom father's cousin married?"

"Father's cousin, indeed! Roderick. One would think she was some near relative. There was some distant relation, or dependent of father's, I believe, who married a missionary. I am sure I do not know, nor care what his name is."

"'Dependent,' indeed!" echoed Miss Adele Boyle, now thoroughly roused by the perverse humour of her friend. "I can tell you she was no dependent at all. She was an heiress, and your father's ward; and I think I have heard my father say that she was a beauty."

"If it is Mary Granger of whom you speak," said Mr. Boyle, whose attention had been diverted by the conversation from the newspaper, "she was one of the most elegant and accomplished women I ever met."

"Come, Matilda; come, Roderick," cried Miss Kate, "it is time for us to leave."

Adele regretted the offence that had been unintentionally

given ; but it could not be remedied, and she kissed Kate so affectionately, as she bade her good night, that the latter could not but regret her own tartness.

"Good-bye, Miss Boyle ; you'll not see me again till next vacation. I'm off to school again bright and early to-morrow morning."

"Good-bye, Roderick, you'll give an old friend a privilege," and Roderick was not at all reluctant to take the proffered kiss.

"Miss Boyle," said he, lingering a moment after Kate had left the room, "I wish you'd kiss that little fairy for me. I'm half in love with her already, and for her sake I believe I will give part of my next allowance to Mrs. Stephens' missionary box. I'd give it all to get a sight of her," and scampering off, and screaming good-bye, as if all were deaf, he soon joined Kate, leaving his sister Matilda and Charles Boyle sauntering on after them, mysteriously discussing the phenomena of moonlight.

V.

Hasty Temper and Tender Belongings.

“Till from *her* breast a sigh convulsive sprung,
 And, Oh, my mother!’ trembled from *her* tongue.
 That name, though but a murmur, that dear name
 Touched every kind affection into flame.”

VARA had not yet lost the motion of the ship, which she had so recently left, and her bed rolled about with her in the most unaccountable manner. All night she dreamed of home. Sometimes she was sitting by the lake, watching the rainbow on the reef; sometimes in her mother's arms, or in the mission school or chapel; then again Rutea and the eagle were dragging her over the mountains; and then she was all alone in one of those massive and splendid caverns which abound in her native isle, and while she shuddered in the vast solitude, the fierce form of a cannibal started out from some obscure corner, or she fled from the glaring eyes of some wild beast. Thus dream chased dream through the long night. Sometimes a feeble moan or plaintive wail reached the quick ear of Mrs. Stephens, who, stealing to the room, would find her little charge in the restless sleep of utter exhaustion. As the good woman felt the flushed cheek and smoothed the tumbled pillow, the pride of the patroness of Pacific missions, yielded to the gentler feelings of a mother's love; and once or twice, when Vara murmured the name ‘mother,’ and once when she distinctly said, “Oh yes, they are very kind, but they are not my own father and my own mother,” other tears besides Vara's fell on the pillow, and the patroness of missions for the first time caught some glimmering perception of the truth, that the benevolence of her own act in taking the trouble and responsibility of nurturing this dear child, was not quite equal to the sacrifice

which her parents had made in yielding her up, nor an exact compensation to the child herself for the suffering of parting from those parents.

The continuance of feverish symptoms the next morning, suggested the propriety of calling in a physician, whose only prescription was quiet and rest, and little Vara, much to her own joy, was left to pass the day in bed. Her head reeled at the very recollection of all that she had seen and heard on the preceding day, and she was glad to shut out all the novelties of this new world from sight and hearing, by the narrow confines of the little front room over the entry. This was *her* room. Small as it was, she felt the pride of possession. It contained nothing indeed to gratify a taste, that was by nature elegant and luxurious, but it was *hers*, and it was neat and convenient. She amused herself, as she lay in bed, planning what alterations she would make in the furniture and the arrangements, if by a magic word she could do whatever she wished. Instead of the coarse paper with its ugly figures in sickish blue and poisonous green, she would paint the walls in imitation of tangled corals, and in place of the yellow border, she would hang around the ceiling the graceful foliage of young bananas, and intersperse them with the bright flowers of the bread-fruit tree. The stiff glazed window-shade, on which appeared a very little blue house, and a very large blood-stained horse, ridden by a lady done in brown, with feathers growing out of her head far above the reach of a sea-green tree that grew out of the horse's foot,—instead of this glaring shade, Vara thought she would gather a pale blue silk in graceful folds over the window, and let it hang down on either side quite to the floor. The patch-work calico quilt that covered the bed, she would exchange for a white silk counterpane, embroidered in sea-weed like her favorite dress. The cherry bureau and wash-stand, and the mahogany framed eight-by-twelve looking-glass gave her more trouble. To elaborate any beautiful designs on so large and intricate a scale exceeded her inventive faculty; her head ached with the effort; she closed her eyes that she might not see these suggestive objects; she tried some time in vain to think of something else, but at last they faded quite out of mind, and

dreaming that she was in her own little cot again in her island home, she sank away into a profound, dreamless, and healthy sleep; and thus she slept till late in the afternoon.

Mrs. Stephens, having hastened through her work for the day, had come to Vara's room to execute a little piece of business which she had been anticipating with more pleasure than she was herself conscious of. This was nothing more nor less than the exploration of Vara's trunk, and the arrangement of the scanty wardrobe in the little cherry bureau, with the expectation of hanging up in the press in her own room, sundry garments which could not be so neatly kept in bureau drawers. To her disappointment Vara still slept. A feeling of delicacy deterred her from entering at once on the self-appointed task. But as she sat gazing on the trunk, waiting for the sleeper to awaken, her curiosity became impatient. What could it contain? What revelations might it not make of missionary poverty and hardships, delightful subjects for missionary gossip at the next meeting of the missionary sewing circle? Would she not spare the child some mortification by preventing her being a witness of the first discovery of those locked-up evidences of the penury of her own parents? And then was she not Vara's mother, and was it not a mother's duty to inspect the clothes of her daughter? Besides, must she not ascertain whether the child had clothes fit to wear next Sunday? Mrs. Stephens had already set her heart upon the eclat of carrying the little missionary to church. And good as she was, even she would not shock the conventionalities of society by exhibiting in church on Sunday, a member of her family, in such an outlandish rig as Vara's, when she made her first appearance in Liberty.

Thus reasoning and questioning with herself, her scruples were silenced and her curiosity triumphed. The key was easily found, the trunk was opened, and the rummaging began. Almost at the very top, lay the white dress, embroidered in green wreaths of sea-weed. Mrs. Stephens' eyes opened to their widest extent—she slowly drew it out, felt it carefully with her hand, put the material to her cheek to be sure of its quality, examined the embroidery, held it

out at arms' length to take a view of the whole, and at length gave vent to her astonishment in so loud a tone, that Vara woke at the first word, and started up in her bed, unobserved by Mrs. Stephens, whose eyes and ears were wholly pre-occupied.

"Well, did I ever—cambric—fine linen cambric—finer than ever my baby wore,—embroidered too,—no sleeves,—low neck,—fanciful pattern,—just like a dance-girl's, or a play actress'!! Well! I always knew that ministers' wives were fools, but I did not think that missionaries were!"

Just then her eye lighted on something else, that looked like finery, lower down in the trunk, and, dragging it out, and dropping the dress, she went off into another burst of exclamations.

"Hity-tity! what have we here!—a hat—a hat fit for a princess!—cherry satin, embroidered in floss silk—well!—this took a heap of precious time, and who was teaching the little heathen religion, I wonder, while madam missionary was working this!—Lace, too!—yes—I do believe real Valenciennes in the inside! Why that lace must be worth as much as—as—half of the articles in our missionary's box!"

By this time Mrs. Stephens was wrought up to a pitch of indignation that she had never felt on any former occasion whatever. The tale which these fine things told, or which she thought they told, could not be gainsayed. She had been a dupe to a bad cause. The dear missionaries for whom she had toiled, and prayed, and begged, were hypocrites after all, and the Pacific island missionaries were wretches of the worst description; and Mr. and Mrs. Austen were especially and infamously the most outrageous of all cheats and impostors. These sentiments she expressed in violent and incoherent exclamations, which Vara happily could not understand, though she was sufficiently frightened by them.

"I wonder," Mrs. Stephens broke out anew: "I wonder if they think they can impose upon me? They'd educate their child at my expense, would they? They'd have me school, and feed, and clothe her, under the belief that they are poor and doing good! No! indeed! I've done the last

for them or theirs ! and I'll send their young one back to them. If they are able to dress her in laces and diamonds, I can tell them that *I am* not !”

Mrs. Stephens had suffered her wrath to carry her beyond the truth : laces she had discovered, but diamonds she had not. Nor did she reflect on one very obvious fact, that *they* could not be very *hypocritical*, who would send the evidences of their guilt to be inspected by the very person they most wished to deceive. Like all hasty persons, she put the worst construction on what was apparent, and sought for additional causes to gratify and inflame her anger, rather than for such as might have appeased it. A hundred slanders against missionaries, which she had heard and despised, now came to her recollection, and found awful confirmation, as she thought, in the wicked finery which poor little Vara's trunk disclosed. She had had a first glimpse behind the scenes ; and she believed that she saw there *all* that she had ever heard or read that was most discreditable to missionary morality and piety. A sense of mortification, and a pang of bitter disappointment, added fuel to her anger. She had never been so excited in all her life. Her feelings carried away her judgment and her self-possession as with a flood. She sank into a chair and sobbed aloud.

Up to this moment Vara had sat in bed mute with astonishment. When she first detected Mrs. Stephens peering into her trunk, a feeling of resentment had crossed her mind. She could not tell why. She could not reason about it. But there was a feeling, an instinct, in her mind, which said that Mrs. Stephens was then and there guilty of a meanness. But when the torrent of indignation poured forth from the lips of that incensed lady, Vara was frightened. And now again, when Mrs. Stephens sobbed and wept, these signs of grief touched the heart of the child, and she forgot both her fears and her resentment. She would have spoken, had she known how to address her. She did not like to call her “Mrs. Stephens,” for she remembered her father's wish : she could not bring herself to pronounce the sacred name of ‘mother.’ Finding that coughing and moving in the bed failed to attract attention, she at length

slipped off the bed, went up to Mrs. Stephens, laid her hand upon her knee, and was about to speak. Mrs. Stephens recoiled from her touch, as if it were a viper's, flung the little hand from her lap, and burst into a paroxysm of weeping and sobbing more violent than ever. Vara—the sensitive Vara—who had never heard an unkind word, or seen an angry look directed to herself, was stunned with consternation; her little body trembled from head to foot like an aspen; but she controlled herself, and whispered a simple prayer to Jesus for aid and direction. She had understood enough to know that her clothes were in some way the occasion of Mrs. Stephens' anger; why or wherefore she could not conceive. But the thought struck her that her mother's letter might make all straight. She ran to the trunk, and from the corner where her mother's hand had put and pointed it out to her, she got the letter, and coming near enough to Mrs. Stephens for that lady to take the letter if she pleased, she said, with a little frightened voice, "My mother, my own mother I mean, gave me this letter to hand to you; perhaps if you are offended at any thing, this letter will—will—make you feel better."

The voice was so timid, so imploring, and so earnest, that Mrs. Stephens could not be cross to the child. Yet, though somewhat relieved by her tears, she was not disposed to be affectionate. She jerked the letter out of Vara's hand, flung herself out of the room, and slammed the door shut after her.

Poor Vara felt as if she was a prisoner, for the manner in which the door was shut seemed to say, that she was not to leave the room as she valued her life. She felt then as if she was indeed all, all alone. She sat down on the floor, in the midst of the scattered memorials of her island-home, and wept.

Mrs. Stephens, not daring to meet any of her family in her present state of mind, sought her own bed-room, and, not knowing what else to do, threw herself upon the bed. She lay there for some time in a state of despairing inactivity. The thought of the world's ridicule, and the sense of disappointment in her own fondest hopes, and the recollection of the energies she had worse than wasted, were

uppermost in her mind, till, exhausted with the violence of her feelings and oppressed with the warmth of the July afternoon, she fell into a doze, from which she was awakened by the entrance of Mr. Stephens.

"Why, Marcia Ann—you asleep;—well, that is strange!"

Mrs. Stephens felt very much as if she had been guilty of some crime, and dared not look her husband in the face. "Yes," she said, "she had been taking a little nap." Rising as she spoke, the letter fell on the floor.

"What is that?" asked Mr. Stephens.

"A letter the little girl gave me; it is from her mother, she says."

"Ah—yes—that Mr. Johnson gave me one from her father. He seems to expect that we will take a deal of trouble with the child, and his letter sounds as if he was conferring a favour, instead of receiving one."

"Hypocrite!—monster!—wretch!" muttered Mrs. Stephens between her teeth. Her husband did not catch the words; he would not have believed his ears, if he had; but he was startled by her manner. He gazed upon her for a minute with a look of unwonted solicitude, but not being able to discover anything very remarkable in her appearance, turned and left the room, thinking to himself, as he went down stairs, "now, if Mrs. Stephens ever *should be* crazy, what ought I to do on its first discovery? Sleeping in the afternoon—symptoms of anger, and that caused by an allusion to a missionary! Unaccountable!—but stranger things have happened." And Mr. Stephens, feeling very unhappy, resolved to lock the dreadful suspicion in his own breast, and to WATCH.

Mrs. Stephens, having picked up the letter from the floor concluded that she might as well read it. "I may as well see what she can say for herself,—at any rate it must be read, I suppose,—and I can promise her I will send her an answer that will—the good for nothing—" But the seal was already broken, and the contents of the letter diverted her from the full expression of her sentiments. The letter was long. As Mrs. Stephens read it, the scowl on her face changed to an expression of interest. Then her

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brow knit, not in anger, but in the effort to suppress some gentler emotion ; and now and then her handkerchief stole up to her face in a furtive manner, as if she feared that her left hand should know what her right hand was doing. At length the letter was read through to the last word, and then Mrs. Stephens wept with a hearty good-will, a flood of weeping, tears of genuine love, respect, sympathy. The letter was so full of grief and of gratitude, of good sense and of true piety. It was the letter of a mother, of an afflicted mother, and such as only a woman of sound judgment and pure heart could either write or understand ; such as a mother, who had ever lost a daughter, and Mrs. Stephens had, could not help but feel.

Towards the close of the letter which had produced this remarkable revolution of feeling in Mrs. Stephens, was the following paragraph : " In my child's trunk are some articles which need a word of explanation. When I married I was rich. I had mingled, more than I ever wished to, in gay and fashionable society ; my wardrobe consequently was expensive, suitable to the circle in which I moved, and to my pecuniary circumstances. Some dresses and articles of value, which I knew could be of no use to me here, I nevertheless brought with me, through a reluctance, on one account and another, to part with them. These party-dresses I have, since the loss of my fortune, cut up and made over into dresses for Vara. This was more economical than to buy new, though coarser material, for it cost us nothing. As we dress to please ourselves in this part of the world, and as the warm climate renders much clothing unnecessary, I have consulted my own fancy and that of my husband, and given to my little girl rather, I must confess, a fantastic wardrobe. I would not mention these facts, were it not for two articles, a cambric dress and gipsy satin hat, which Vara begs so hard for permission to carry with her, that I cannot refuse her. She wishes to keep them as mementoes of her island-home, and of my handiwork. I embroidered them myself at odd hours, or when hearing the little girls say their lessons. It has been a pleasant relaxation from severer toil, and such is my expertness in the use of the needle, that they consumed far less of my precious time than a stranger

to my skill might suppose. Perhaps you will think it wrong in me to foster a love of dress in my child, but, in my partial judgment at least, dear little Vara is in no danger of an extravagant love of mere outward decoration. At the time of my marriage I possessed a large quantity of costly lace, you will find it all in Vara's trunk. I leave it to your judgment to do with it what you please. Perhaps Vara will value it one day for her mother's sake. The jewellery which I once owned, has long since purchased books for my husband, or articles of comfort which our small salary could not afford, except a set of diamonds, of considerable value; these are heir-looms, which descended to me from my mother; I desire that they may be kept in some place of security and given to Vara when she grows up, unless her absolute wants may at any time render their sale desirable."

Mrs. Stephens, with the tears still streaming down her cheeks, and heaping reproaches on herself for her former hasty judgment, hastened to Vara's room, and catching up the child upon her lap, pressed her to her bosom, and gave utterance to her feelings in the first words of deep love which Vara had heard since she left her island-home. "My child, my daughter, I little thought that you would seem to me like an own daughter, that you would open again those fountains of affection which have been sealed since my little Anna's death; but now I feel to you all a mother's love. I will be to you a mother. I cannot be what your own mother is. She is a noble woman. She has made a sacrifice in sending you here, which few mothers, with such hearts as hers, would have consented to. You must love her best of all the world; but next to her, try, my child, to love me. Will you, Vara? Will you love me?" The child clasped her arms round her new mother's neck, and whispered in her ear, "Yes, indeed I will. I feel that I can love you now. I promised my own father, that I would *try* to love you; but I know now that I can love you without trying," and again and again she sealed the promise with a kiss. Long they sat, Vara in her mother's lap, both silent—both happy. The sun was setting in the west, and Vara, through the half-closed blinds, caught such glimpses of gaily-coloured clouds, that she almost believed she saw the rainbow of promise.

The tea-bell rung. Mrs. Stephens was obliged to go. Vara, now quite recovered from her fatigue and fright, promised to follow her so soon as she could slip on her dress. She was happy now—happier than she had been since the morning when Rutea called her from watching the rainbow on the reef.

It was with some difficulty that Vara found her way to the front basement-room, which was the ordinary sitting-room of the family. She timidly entered and took her seat in the only vacant chair opposite Daniel. That gentlemanly youth greeted her with a half grunt and half salutation, edged in between a mouthful of bread and butter, and a prodigious gulp of hot tea. Mrs. Stephens was silent and thoughtful. Mr. Stephens was silent and restless, casting uneasy glances from time to time at his wife, fully possessed with the apprehension that his presence of mind might at any moment be severely tested by the outburst of a sudden paroxysm of madness. Daniel was wholly engaged in the business of eating. Vara was left to make her own observations on the room. These were soon finished. The little mahogany supper-table was covered with a white cloth. The crockery was white stone-ware. An ingrain carpet of the hottest and brightest colours covered the floor; the chairs were maple, with cane seats. The mantel-piece was garnished with two white and gilt china jars, filled with the most artificial-looking of artificial paper flowers, two brass candlesticks, terribly bright, and turned over with their bottoms to the wall, so as to display as much of their burnished surface as possible—in most uncomfortable positions, which they could never have retained, save through the force of long habit, for it was evident that they were seldom disturbed, except for the purpose of receiving a new polishing—and one large glass lamp, the mate of which was burning on the supper-table, filled with the darkest of oleaginous substances. Over the mantel-piece hung a melancholy print, representing a marble monument, surmounted with an urn; a most remarkable willow-tree on one side, and a most remarkable lady, clothed in black, on the other, while the name of—

Anna Stephens,*Born, April ———**Died, January ———*

was written in a neat hand upon the monument itself. This print recalled to Vara's mind the conversation she had just had with her new mother, and she felt a respect for and interest in the unsightly picture, for the sake of her whose memory consecrated it; yet she could not help contrasting it in her own mind with the pretty etchings her father had drawn in her dear little book of her island-home. On the side of the room opposite to the mantel-piece, and filling up the whole space between the window and the door, hung a map of the Pacific islands. Vara's quick eye soon detected the name of her own home. Her mind was instantly diverted from all around her. She gazed, till blinded with tears, she was obliged to step out of the room to hide them; nor did she dare again look at the map during the whole evening. The only other articles of furniture, were a plain desk, with book-shelves over it, on one side of the fire-place, and a small work-table on the other side next to the window. We have been thus particular in describing the room, because this was to be literally the home of Vara. Here the family gathered morning, noon, and night, visiting other parts of the house only to dust, and clean, and sleep, and on great occasions to see company.

Having finished her inspection of the furniture, Vara began to examine more particularly her new relatives. Towards Daniel she felt, though she knew not why, a positive dislike, and towards Mr. Stephens a strange indifference. Her new mother occupied more of her thoughts. Not yet inducted into the conventionalities of American society, happily for herself, she could not know that this mother was but a plain woman, as her own mother's friends would have called her. She loved her, and yet she felt that there was even in her a something to which she was unused—or rather the absence of a something to which she had been accustomed in her own parents. She had too little knowledge of the world to discover that the something which she missed

was the air of polish and refinement which would have distinguished her own father and mother in any society. She was among kind friends, yet uncongenial ones; and it was the dim perception of this yet mysterious fact, that depressed her spirits and made her sad and gloomy.

Scarcely were the tea things cleared away, before a knock at the front basement door was followed by the entrance of Mrs. Polly Williams, who took her seat on the first chair she happened to see, and forthwith burst out into a strain of remark that amused Vara not a little, for notwithstanding the woman's rough ways, there was a homely kindness in her countenance, that reassured the sinking heart of Vara.

"Well! Mrs. Stephens, so the little missionary's come, is she. I suppose now you won't leave a body a penny to get yeast; you'll be begging harder than ever for the poor missionaries. Our folks had done tea, so I thought I'd come and see what a missionary's child looked like—and seems to me, if all of them had as purty childer as she be, they needn't mind being a little poor like. Poor little thing; I spose she never had enough to eat in all her life before now. I'm sure she looks pale and thin enough. Well, she shan't want in your house, if you do give so much to the missionaries. I tell my childer when they find fault with their victuals, to remember how the missionaries do, who have nothing to eat but snails. My dear, I spose you are quite fond of snails, seeing that you've been brought up on 'em, but I advise you to leave off eating them now that you're among civilized folks."

"I don't believe Vara ever ate a snail in her life," cried Daniel, looking up from his books, which he had been pretending to study, though in reality listening to the conversation.

"Now tell me, you Vara, didn't you have plenty to eat, and good things too?"

The idea of being an object of pity, roused Vara's pride, and indignation conquered her natural timidity.

"Yes, indeed. Do you think my father would let me suffer hunger? Why we had plenty, plenty of good things—not such things as you have here, but much nicer than

anything I've seen here *yet*. We had plantains and bananas, and bread-fruit and yams, and fish and meat, and sweet potatoes and—and—oh, I can't tell all, there were so many good things."

"Now you don't say! why I thought—" but Mrs. Williams' thought she was not permitted to say; for Daniel broke in with a triumphant tone—

"There, mother, I told you I didn't believe but that the missionaries lived just as well as we did. I'm glad I wasn't such a fool as to go without butter, as you wanted me to, to save the money for the missionary box—except that month when you promised me, if I would, a visit to New York."

"Well, Daniel," replied the mother, decidedly, with just the least touch of pique in her tone, "I do not see why you should begrudge the missionaries enough to eat. It is but little gratification they can have, without subjecting them to absolute suffering."

Daniel did not know very well how to answer this, but did not choose to be put down. "I don't care how much they eat, as long as I have enough, but I dare say they have no more hardships to endure than we have."

"I did not know that *you* had any particular hardships to endure."

"I've got these plaguey lessons to learn, anyhow, muttered the amiable Daniel, and gave his attention once more to his books.

"I spose," said Mrs. Williams, whose curiosity was excited, "you lived in a tent, like the Arabs, or may be you lived in a mud house, as them Hottentots do?"

"Why, what do you mean! I wish you could see our house once. Oh, it is the most beautiful house that ever was. There isn't a room in it as small as this. The rooms are *so* large, and they open front and back upon the loveliest verandah; and then the garden all around the house is so pretty—there are winding walks covered with jack-stones, and bowers, and most beautiful flowers; and then there is the grove, with such beautiful walks running all through it; and seats just in the very nicest places,—and—and—oh, everything beautiful! why my father and mother wouldn't live in such an ugly house as this."

Mrs. Stéphens sewed very rapidly, but said nothing. Daniel, forgetting his books, drunk in every word, while his keen face shone with malicious pleasure. As Mrs. Williams could not conceive how any one could call this house ugly, and could not take in the idea that a missionary's residence could by any possibility be delectable, her face expressed the most puzzled astonishment.

As for Vara, she little understood the mischief she was doing to the cause of missions. She felt that her island-home had been insulted, and was irritated by the pity which these honest people were so ready to show to her parents, who, in her judgment, were the most enviable persons in the world.

"Do tell! So your house is purtier than this! Well, I never!—who'd a thought when we was pitying the missionaries so!"

"What kind of a parlour have you in that *beautiful* house?" interposed Daniel.

"Oh,—a *beautiful* parlour."

"Law me—parlors too—who'd a thought!"

"What kind of furniture?" asked Daniel.

"Oh, beautiful furniture! The loveliest bamboo chairs, of the most graceful shapes, and some of them painted to represent birds and flowers; and couches, covered with elegant tappa; and a cabinet, full of exquisite shells; and all around the room pictures; and large fans, made of the most splendid feathers you ever saw; and—and—oh, heaps of things!"

"What kind of a carpet?"

"Carpet? Why, no carpet at all; but the most beautiful polished floors you ever saw. We havn't a carpet in our house, except one little piece that father keeps as a kind of curiosity!"

"No carpets! Well now; I should think your poor mother's back would break scrubbing them floors so bright!"

"My mother scrub?" cried Vara, half amused, half angry.

"Why, who makes the floor so bright, if she don't?" asked Daniel, eagerly.

"Who? Why, the servants to be sure!"

"The servants!" echoed Daniel, with delight.

"The sarvants!" screamed Mrs. Williams; "and does your mother keep sarvants?"

"Why, to be sure she does, plenty of them; there is Otoo and Lulu, and Mulemule, besides little Tara and Onooeoo."

"And you say all these be sarvants?"

"Yes."

"And they do your mother's work?"

"Yes."

"They wash and scrub, and sweep and cook, and do everything?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And your mother does none of the work herself?"

"No, ma'am."

"What do you do to amuse yourselves?" said Daniel, intent upon drawing out all the information to the discredit of the missionaries that he could.

"Oh, a great many things. Every day—after dinner—we have dinner late in the afternoon."

"Dinner late in the afternoon!—quite stylish, I declare."

Vara looked at him with surprise, not comprehending what this meant. She saw by the countenances of her friends that her information produced an unhappy effect. She could not conceive why or wherefore. She hesitated whether to go on or not.

Daniel, finding that his remark had silenced her, put her on the track again.

"Well, every day after dinner,—we—order the coach and horses and take a drive, I suppose?"

"Oh no!" said Vara, laughing, "we have no coach and horses, and no roads either for that matter; but we usually take a walk upon the sea shore, and sometimes we take a sail upon the lagoon in father's boat, and when we return, mother sings me songs to her guitar, or father brings out his flute or violin, and—"

"Wall, now, I've heard enough. It takes childer and fools to tell the truth. I tell you what, Mrs. Stephens, you needn't be poking your missioners' box at me agin. I'm a hard working woman—I can't afford to keep sarvants. I

haint no time to take walks for pleasuring, nor to sing songs, nor to teach my children to dance polkys, as I spose mis-sioners do, to the music of their fiddles, and I haint agoing to give another red cent to them as does it. I'm glad, little girl, you've come here, and I hope you'll larn that people what live on charities shouldn't do as your father and mother does."

So saying, Mrs. Polly Williams flung herself out of the room with an air of righteous indignation. Vara, frightened by the tone and manner, but more than all, by the imputation of wrong of some kind, she did not understand what, on her own dear father and mother, burst into tears.

Mrs. Stephens looked vexed and angry, and failed to speak as kindly as she meant to, when she bade the child go to bed.

The entrance of Mr. Stephens a few moments afterwards, found her boxing the ears of Daniel for some misdemeanor. The surprise of Daniel at this manifestation of anger, was only equalled by the fright of Mr. Stephens, who saw in this unusual act, and in the flushed face and confused manner of his wife, increasing evidences of incipient insanity. He half closed the door without entering, thinking best to go at once for a doctor; but on second thoughts, concluded to wait for some more decided symptoms. Mrs. Stephens was too busy with her own thoughts to observe his pale face and agitated manner. During family prayer, which followed immediately upon his entrance, no sense of reverence could induce Mr. Stephens to close his eyes, but he kept them fixed upon Mrs. Stephens, ready to spring to his feet at the first outbreak of maniacal violence. Mr. Stephens would rather not have gone to bed that night, but it would have been awkward to sit up. If Mrs. Stephens had been observant, she would have detected a watchful eye peering out from between the bed-clothes, following her in all her movements about the room, long after she supposed her husband sound asleep. At length he did sleep, but dreamed all night of mad-houses, maniacs, suicides, and murders.

Mrs. Stephens, after attending to various little matters, which she fancied must be done before she retired for the night, though in fact she only wanted something to do, to

keep down the excitement of her mind, at last threw herself into a chair, and gave free course to her thoughts. At first, as she thought, she rocked violently backwards and forwards in that very chair, in which she had so often rocked her little Anna through long nights of sorrowful sickness. At last the rocking became less violent, till it ceased altogether. Then Mrs. Stephens knelt by her chair, and after some time spent in silent prayer, she rose and got the letter of Vara's mother, and read it all through. Her countenance was once more serene as she laid it aside, saying to herself as she did so, "I am sure she is a good woman. She will be able to explain to me what I cannot understand in her conduct. Perhaps Mr. Hamilton can explain it. I'll see him to-morrow about it. At any rate, God has given me another dear daughter in the place of Anna, and I will love her and deserve her love." Then she stepped softly to Vara's room. She stooped and kissed the tear that stood on the cheek of the sleeping child. Vara murmured "mother," and her new mother blessed her from her heart, and was soon herself asleep in the still and silent night.

VI.

Harsh Judges and Partial Advocates.

"Rashly, nor oft-times truly, doth man pass judgment on his brother ;
For he seeth not the springs of the heart, nor heareth the reasons of
the mind."

"I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices, made up of likings and dislikings—the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, and antipathies. In a certain sense, I hope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. * * I cannot *like* all people alike."

THE next morning, when Vara opened her eyes, they rested upon the face of her new mother, gazing upon her so kindly and fondly, that the child felt her heart beat with joy as she threw her arms around her neck.

She would have been happy the whole day, if nothing else had happened to contribute to her pleasure. But something else did happen ; for early in the morning Miss Boyle called, in her carriage, to enquire after the little invalid, and finding her so well, asked permission to give her a drive, and show her the town. Vara thought that Miss Boyle's kindness was wonderful. But any one who had seen that beautiful child, would have envied Miss Boyle's happiness. And no one could have wearied in answering her questions, dictated as they were by natural tact, and sense, and feeling.

Miss Boyle, at least, felt that the obligation was all on her own side. After a long drive, Miss Boyle ordered the carriage to her own house, that they might partake of some refreshments. There she showed Vara the drawing rooms. The child was astonished at their magnificence, which was really dazzling to her inexperienced eye ; yet somehow she felt more at home and at her ease amidst all this elegance, than she did in the little stiff parlour of Mrs. Stephens, where, in spite of the prevailing order and

excessive neatness, no one article of furniture seemed to be where it ought to be, or to adorn the apartment, The pictures especially attracted her attention, and Miss Boyle was struck with the correctness of her taste and appreciation of their best points.

But when the piano was opened, and Miss Boyle played such a soft and gentle symphony, as she judged would agree with Vara's poetical temperament, the child was in ecstasies. It was sweeter, she said, than the voice of the ocean wind whispering songs among the palm-leaves, wilder than the sighing of the evening breeze through the bamboo brakes of her island-home. But Miss Boyle was herself astonished, in turn, when Vara, discovering a guitar, caught it up, and hugged and kissed it as if it had been an old friend, and begging Miss Boyle to tune it, took it again and played Pleyel's German hymn, singing, in her sweet childish voice, that tender hymn, "Jesus, Saviour of my soul."

"Oh, Miss Boyle, will you please take off this cherry ribbon, and put a blue ribbon on your guitar?"

"Why would you have a blue one?"

"Because my mother always has a blue one on hers?"

"So your mother has a guitar, has she?"

"Yes—but perhaps I ought not to tell what my mother has or has not, for I find I make people angry when I tell them about my island-home."

"I will never be angry with you, Vara. You may tell me just what you choose—and now I want you to tell me one thing truthfully—are they *kind* to you where you now live?"

"Why, Miss Boyle, they are all kind to me, and my new mother is very, very kind."

"Then what did you mean about their being angry?"

Vara hesitated a minute, then kissing Miss Boyle, said in her arch way, "I'll be angry with you, Miss Boyle, if you ask me any more questions."

Miss Boyle felt reproved, and wondered once more at the innate good sense of the child.

Soon after Vara left with Miss Boyle, Mrs. Stephens

put on her best hat, and surprised Mr. Hamilton by a morning call at his study in the parsonage. The good minister, assured that Mrs. Stephens would not intrude upon his studies without a reasonable cause, received her with cordiality ; and after being satisfied in answer to his questions, that all her family were in good health, paused to give her an opportunity to explain the object of her visit. This she found more awkward than she had expected. After some hesitation, however, she concluded that it was best to come at once to the point.

"Do you know, Mr. Hamilton, that the child of the missionary we agreed to take, has already arrived.

"No, I did not ; it seems to me that hardly time has elapsed for the answer to your letter."

"That's true. They did not wait to write, but embraced the first opportunity to send the child herself, as it was uncertain when another might occur. I almost wish they had not though."

"Why so ? Are you disappointed in the child ?"

"Not at all. She is the most beautiful child I ever saw ; and so sweet and sensible for her years. I love her already. I feel grateful to my Heavenly Father. Indeed, sir, it seems to me almost as if my own little Anna had come back to me from the skies, more lovely than she was when God took her."

"Then why are you sorry she has come ?"

"That's not easy to answer. I am sure I am not willing to part with her, now that she has come. But the truth is, Mr. Hamilton, I have my fears that I have made a mistake in supposing that all missionaries are very good. Some things that the little girl tells, leads me to suspect that her parents do not live just as missionaries ought to live. Why, sir, she says that they live in a large and beautiful house, and have a beautiful flower-garden, and keep five or six servants, and dine late in the afternoon, and spend their evenings in singing songs, and playing on the guitar and violin. Now, sir, is it right for us to spend our money to support those who, while pretending to deny themselves to Christianize the poor heathen, are really living in luxury, and wasting their time in trifling, frivolous amusements ?"

Mr. Hamilton's kind heart struggled to conceal the smile that played upon his face, as he gravely answered these charges of missionary misdemeanors. "Well, really, Mrs. Stephens, you have made out a case that looks on the face of it very serious; but it seems to me that I can offer you a probable solution of some of its difficulties. As for the *large* and *beautiful* house of this missionary; it is probably *large*, because in that hot climate they need large and capacious rooms, and a free circulation of air, in order to a tolerable degree of comfort. Its beauty is probably owing to the situation it occupies—to the effect of verandahs—without which houses in hot climates are never built; and also not a little to the imagination of the child herself, who would be apt to think every thing pertaining to her own home most beautiful."

"But the garden, sir, the flower-garden, with its walks and arbours?"

"Is probably to be ascribed partly to the ease with which flowers are cultivated, and bowers twined of running vines, in a tropical climate; and partly to a laudable desire to give employment to the natives, under the eye of the missionary, where he can at the same time elevate their tastes, redeem them from habits of idleness, and find opportunity of imparting to them religious instruction."

"But, sir, the *servants*—*five* servants—I'm sure she mentioned."

"I think I have seen it stated in the missionary reports, that Mrs. Austen engages very actively in the duties of the mission, having the supervision of several of the schools—a class of young girls, whom she teaches to sew, besides assisting her husband, in the way of rewriting his translations, before they are printed. If this is the case, Mrs. Austen can have very little time for ordinary domestic operations, and must have recourse to the aid of the natives. Moreover, five or six natives of any tropical country cannot accomplish as much work as one strong woman can in our colder latitudes. Their late dinner-hour must also be charged to the account of the climate—the excessive heat of the noon rendering it impossible to eat or to

exert one's-self in any way; and if they cultivate their musical taste, as a relaxation, I do not know that we should blame them."

"Oh dear, Mr. Hamilton, I am afraid I have done this good woman great injustice."

"I think it likely you have. I have heard Mr. Austen spoken of in the highest terms. He made great personal sacrifices when he devoted himself to a missionary field. He had talents, piety, and address, to command a high position in this country. He was urged to accept the pastorate in one of our large cities, yet he refused all. His wife, too, I have been informed, is a woman of rare accomplishments. They have toiled long and faithfully at their post, and, if we can judge from the printed reports of the mission, have been greatly blessed."

"I felt sure, all along, that she was a good woman, for none but a good woman could be the mother of such a daughter, or could write such a letter as she wrote to me. Here it is, sir—I wish you would read it."

Mr. Hamilton read it all, his countenance betraying the deepest emotion. When he had finished, he rose from his seat, and pacing the room, talked to himself, apparently unconscious of the presence of another person. "Excellent, noble woman! How little do I appreciate the blessings of my condition. How illy could I part with one of my dear children. And if they were all gone, yet have I multitudes of congenial friends to soothe my domestic solitude. But you have put away your *only* one. You are left alone in a land of strangers. Solitary amidst a race but just elevated above heathenism, with hardly one to sympathize with you, yet cheerfully have you made the sacrifice; yes, gratefully have you committed your daughter to strangers, relying with exalted faith on the promise of God!"

Mr. Hamilton resumed his seat, and turning to Mrs. Stephens, who had been equally affected with himself, said, "My dear madam, I feel impatient to see your little charge, and I shall claim the privilege of sharing with you the pains of her education."

"Thank you, sir. You have relieved my mind of

another difficulty, for since I have ascertained the character of Vara's parents, I have felt that I was incapable of educating her in just that way which they would like."

"I will call at your house this evening. In the meantime, to resume the subject on which we were talking, permit me to remind you, that parents who loved their child, as these parents evidently love that child, never would have consented to send her so far away, to live in dependence on entire strangers, if they themselves had the means to live in luxury and pleasure."

"That is true, sir; I never thought of that."

"For the rest, Mrs. Stephens, if you will question the little girl closely, you will probably find that her father and mother are not neglectful of their great work. Should you, however, find any difficulty in reconciling some things with your notions of propriety, I advise you to write to them and ask an explanation, and I doubt not they will be able to give you a satisfactory one."

"Oh, sir, I am sure I am satisfied already. They are better judges of what is proper in their circumstances than I could be. I do not think I would have cared about it at all, if it had not been that my Daniel, who never was over fond of the missionaries, put the worst possible construction on all that Vara said, and that Mrs. Polly Williams, who happened to be present when Vara was telling us these things, grew positively spiteful, and declared she would never send the missionaries another cent."

"Mrs. Williams is a good woman at heart," replied Mr. Hamilton, "though she is ignorant and rather too quick tempered. But do you manage to have both her and Daniel present this evening, when I call, and perhaps we may be able to correct the impression that has been made upon their minds."

When Vara returned from Miss Boyle's, she found Mrs. Stephens impatiently waiting for her, surrounded with calicoes, muslins, and delaines, and attended by Miss Smilks the dress-maker, whom she had coaxed from other pressing engagements, to cut out and fit sundry dresses, which were to be made at a special meeting of the Ladies' Missionary

Sewing Association, which was called for that express purpose, to meet at Mrs. Stephens' the next day.

Vara's fastidious taste was somewhat shocked at the selection which had been made for her attire. The colours and figures were dreadfully ugly. They were, indeed, decidedly vulgar, though Vara knew too little of the prevailing tastes, or even nomenclature of polite society, to call them so. But she kept her own opinions to herself, and appeared to be, and was grateful for the kindness and trouble which Mrs. Stephens bestowed upon her.

For the rest of that day, and indeed for several successive days, Vara was constantly employed lending her assistance in the making up of her dresses, and her new friends were not a little astonished at her dexterity, and proficiency, in the arts of stitching, seaming, felling, and binding.

The visit of Mr. Hamilton in the evening was one of unqualified delight to Vara. He was more like her father, than any one she had yet seen. He was a minister, too. And he received her so kindly. She was established on his knee as soon as he took his seat, and continued there nearly all the evening. She had resolved, after the bitter experience of the last night, never to be communicative again about her island-home. As often as she was tempted to speak on the subject, she repeated to herself a word, that had had an awful signification in her vocabulary from her infancy—"taboo," "taboo." Everything connected with her own father and mother, from this time, was to be tabooed from general conversation. The sinister looks of Daniel, and the ill-tempered countenance of Mrs. Polly Williams, assisted her in keeping her resolution this evening.

But nothing could resist the insinuating kindness of Mr. Hamilton. In spite of herself, she was drawn out. At first she was cautious and noncommittal.

But Mr. Hamilton always had some commentary to make on what she said, which conciliated the favourable opinion of the rest. At last she became positively talkative. Mr. Hamilton acted as interpreter. Vara, herself, was astonished at the light which he threw on many subjects that she had never understood before. She, with childish art-

lessness, was only talking about her parents—what they said and did,—and how they lived. But he made all that she said illustrative of the details of a faithful missionary's life. His wearisome labours, thankless toils, heart-aches, head-aches, difficulties, obstacles, and disappointments.

At last Mr. Stephens came in from the store. Mr. Hamilton put the little girl down from his knee, opened the Bible, and read the seventh chapter of Matthew,—“ Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Then, all kneeling, he led in family prayer, praying especially for the self-denying heralds of the cross, that they might enjoy the sympathies of the churches at home, and might not be misunderstood or misjudged. Nor did he forget to pray that God would sanctify the good gift of another daughter to that home, to the happiness of the whole household, and that the little stranger might find in them the love of kindred hearts.

When they rose from their knees, Daniel looked ashamed, yet sullen; and Mrs. Williams made frequent applications of the corner of her apron to her eye. She lingered after Mr. Hamilton had gone: for some time she tried to talk upon a variety of subjects, but could not succeed. At last she began with what was nearest her heart—“ Well, now, Mrs. Stephens, I may as well say my say, and be off with myself. We be poor, foolish, simple critters. Only to think how I was blaming them poor missioners, who are slaving themselves to death to teach the heatheners the Gospel. I ought to be ashamed of myself. I moughter known better than to speak before I knew nothin about it. But, what I have to say, Mrs. Stephens, is that I am real sorry, and ashamed. I am desperate sorry; and as for you, little girl!”—and Mrs. Williams caught the little girl in her arms and kissed her, and then burst out into such a sob, as she turned and left the room, that they heard her long after she had shut the front basement door.

The next morning Mrs. Stephens was full of business in the kitchen, making due preparation for the meeting of the Ladies' Missionary Sewing Society. Once or twice she called upon Vara to render some assistance, but found her so

awkward, and unused to the least domestic operations, that she gladly dispensed with her assistance altogether.

When Vara first heard that there was to be a great deal of company in the house, she dreaded it not a little. But when she learned that Miss Adele Boyle would be there, she felt somewhat reassured. She, at least, was not a stranger. Vara felt that she could look to her for advice and assistance in any emergency that might occur.

Soon after the noonday meal, the company began to arrive. In despite of the heat of the day, they were dressed up to their very throats, and none but her dear Adele, who came last of all, seemed to have consulted comfort, or dared to depart from the most stiff, starched, and buckram fashion of the day. Her dress was of snowy whiteness, loosely gathered in fluttering and transparent folds over her white neck and arms. The parlour was full, the little room behind the parlour, used as a spare bedroom, was also full, and the entry was full; some, indeed, of the early comers, took their places in the entry at their first arrival, for the sake, as they said, of enjoying the breeze. Vara could not help thinking they meant to say the dust, which the little wind there was, did not fail to carry with it. It might have been observed of these ladies afterwards, that they were particularly well informed as to which of the guests remembered the missionary-box, and which forgot it. Among others who were said to have forgotten it, was Miss Adele Boyle; but Vara thought she saw her hand slyly move in that direction, as she came up from tea with her, when the entry was deserted. Certain it is, that the next day, among many pennies and more sixpences, one undoubted gold piece was found in that very same missionary-box.

Vara was wearied, vexed, and annoyed beyond measure, by the critical inspection which she had to pass through, from one and all of the ladies. It was as much as she could do to keep down the natural impatience of her temper. The worst of it was, that they all felt obliged to kiss her, and there were some whom, most decidedly, she would rather not have kissed. It was well for her that she had pronounced a solemn taboo on all relating to her island-home. No one knows what disagreeable denouement might have

been the result of an unwise communication ; as it was, Vara heard some things that tingled in her ears, and stung her to the heart. Her proud lips quivered, and her eye flashed more than once on those who had set her down, after failing to draw any information from her about her parents, as a very pretty, but decidedly stupid child.

One young lady, exceedingly thin, dressed in black silk, with a very conspicuous brooch, having a large yellow stone set in a small rim of gold, after having exhausted her eloquence in talking against the use of rum and tobacco—vices of which she certainly would have been acquitted—began to berate the extravagance of some missionaries of whom she had heard, who, when they had returned to this country on visits to their friends, had been guilty of the great crime of dressing as well as other people.

"When we," said she, "are so benevolent as to spend our time sewing for them, and scraping together money by fairs and all sorts of troublesome expedients, the least that they can do is, to study and practise the strictest economy."

"You seem to regard the missionaries as objects of charity," remarked Miss Adele.

The young lady in black silk, with the big pin, stared at Miss Adele, as much as to say, what else are they ?

The latter continued, "Does not the Bible say, they that serve at the altar, shall live by the altar ? If they give themselves to the ministry, have they not a right to the support of the church ? Has not God required Christians to support their ministers as imperatively as he has the husband to support his wife, or parents their children ? Nay, do not ministers give an equivalent in their services, which renders their salaries a matter of debt, which they are bound in justice to pay ?"

"All that is true as to our ministers and pastors at home, Miss Boyle, but it strikes me that missionaries have no such claims upon us. To be sure we ought to sustain them just as we ought to help the poor, but then what we give in both cases is properly considered a matter of charity, and not of debt."

"Were not the first apostles and teachers of Christianity,

missionaries to the heathen ? and yet did not they recognize the principle that they had a right to the support of churches already established ?”

“ Oh ! but times have changed since then, Miss Boyle.”

“ Yes, times have changed ; but principles cannot change. The church of God is a kingdom ; and, like any other kingdom, she has many servants engaged in a great variety of services, in many different places. Some at home, some abroad. And those away from home are as much entitled to support as the others are. Just as our government pays her ambassadors and representatives in foreign countries, and supports her navy in every harbour in the world, to protect her commerce, and citizens in foreign lands, and supports her soldiers who are sent forth to conquer and possess new territories—so should the kingdom of Christ support those missionaries who are His ambassadors in distant lands, and who are labouring to conquer new territories, and bring them under the sway of His sceptre.”

So long a speech from Miss Adele surprised all present, and herself too. Perhaps it was love to Vara that called forth her championship. But her adversary was not quite vanquished.

“ Well, Miss Boyle, I don’t see, after all, that what you have said conflicts with what I have said, that the missionaries should be as economical as possible.”

“ So we all ought to be,” answered Adele. Several pairs of eyes glanced at the young lady, who was reputed for her extravagance. She understood their glances, and blushed. However, she rallied enough to finish her sentence. “ What I disapprove of is, the attempt to judge for them what is economical, and what not. It seems to me that they should be allowed a salary sufficient, with ordinary prudence, to support them with comfort, and then they should be left to spend that salary as they see best. It is not for us to dictate what kind of dresses they shall wear, or what kind of food they shall eat, or what kind of houses they shall build. We must leave them to err, if you please, in these matters after the weakness of their own judgments.”

“ Well, really, you will give this little girl high notions of missionary independence, if she remain much under your tuition.”

Just then they were called to tea. The company was so numerous, that they were obliged to divide into two detachments. But if they were crowded who were to eat, so were the good creatures that were to be eaten. There were hot waffles, hot muffins, and hot biscuits. Three kinds of cake, of each of which every one must take a piece. Two kinds of sweetmeats, distributed in little plates, which you must accept, whether there was room for the little plate near your big plate or not. Then there was cheese and smoked beef. It was marvellous with what facility these missionary ladies, who were used to the thing, ate and helped each other to eat. Cups of hot tea were to be passed, tumblers of cold water were to be passed, and every thing on the table must be passed all round, at least once; and, if that particular article was again disturbed, by any one wishing a little more, or by any one supposing that some one else *might* wish more, it seemed to be a point of etiquette not to restore it to its place, till it had once more made the circuit of the table. Vara caught Adele smiling, as two plates of cheese made this circuit at the same time, in opposite directions, and neither was stopped till the whole journey was completed.

Adele ate at the first table, and immediately afterwards left. With her, Vara's interest went too; and she was not sorry when the last of the guests disappeared.

VII.

Cedious Ways and Ciresome People.

"Oh! ask not, hope thou not too much
 Of sympathy below;
 Few are the hearts whence our same touch
 Bids the sweet fountains flow;
 Few—and by still conflicting powers
 Forbidden here to meet;—
 Such ties would make this life of ours
 Too fair for aught so fleet.
 * * * * *

For that full bliss of thought allied,
 Never to mortals given,
 Oh! lay thy lovely dreams aside,
 Or lift them up to heaven."

SUNDAY morning Vara was arrayed in her new costume. It was very uncomfortable, and very far from suiting her taste. The high-necked delaine, with its tight sleeves, confining the arms at the shoulders; the straw hat, shutting out vision and hearing, disfigured on one side with a huge rosette of ugly ribbon, flattened as completely as if it had been subjected to hydraulic pressure, made her, in her own estimation, a figure of fun. Mrs. Stephens was disappointed that she exhibited none of the delight usual to children of her age, in the possession of any new article of dress.

Had the little girl told her how her untutored and natural taste filled her with repugnance at this artificial attire, she would not have understood it. She pressed her to accept and wear a coral necklace, which had adorned her own neck in earlier years; but Vara was proof against her entreaties. Mrs. Stephens attributed the refusal to a natural indifference to finery, which her mother had intimated, by saying that she thought her daughter in no danger

of indulging an excessive attachment to mere outward adornment. This reflection, happily, consoled the good woman. Nevertheless, Vara never came nearer committing that foible in her life, than on that day. She never before gave so much thought to her outward appearance. She believed that she looked like a fright, and this conviction made her self-conscious and awkward. If her own mother had met her in the street that day, she could not have recognized, in the stiff walk and cast-down countenance, the graceful and artless child whose beauty had once adorned the island-home.

Once in church, Vara's attention was diverted from her self, by the novelty of all she saw, and by her interest in the services, which was increased by the affection she already entertained for Mr. Hamilton.

A few pews in front of Mr. Stephens, sat a gentleman of large size and portly form. When the congregation rose to pray, this gentleman, as some others did, turned his back to the pulpit, and looked down the church. As he did so, Vara, to whom such a posture was a novelty, looked up in his face—their eyes met. He fixed upon her a gaze so intent that she could not look away—the colour mounted to his temples—then it receded, and left his face of a deadly paleness, and he turned and sat down. Vara was afraid he was sick. She saw that his large frame trembled. Again and again he wiped his brow—but by the time the prayer was ended, he resumed an erect position in his seat, and Vara soon ceased to think of him in her rapt attention to the sermon. The text was one that of all others she herself would have chosen.

Gen. ix. 13. "I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth."

He spoke first of God as a covenant God. Secondly, he enlarged on the various covenants which God had made from time to time with His people. Thirdly, he described the different tokens and seals which God had affixed to His covenants. Especially he spoke of baptism, and one remark seemed purposely intended for Vara. "As the sun shining upon the watery cloud, is reflected in the beautiful form and

colours of the rainbow, so may the eye of faith discover a more beautiful and radiant bow of promise, when the rays of the Sun of Righteousness are reflected from the watery drops that bedew the brow of infancy." Vara thought of her device, which that day of all others met her parents' eyes, in the opened Bible. She thought of the rainbow on the reef. She thought of the bow that shone around her own head in the hour of her baptism; and she believed the promise that God would be her God, now and for ever. The pleasant train of thoughts thus suggested, banished all recollection of the elderly gentleman whom she had observed in church, till he was brought to mind by a conversation at the dinner-table.

"Did you observe Mr. Granger this morning?" asked Mr. Stephens.

"No, I did not," said his wife. "Why do you ask?"

"Because he rose at the first prayer, as he usually does, but suddenly became very pale, and sat down. I thought he was sick, and expected to see him leave the church as soon as the prayer was ended, but he did not."

"Granger," thought Vara, "that was mother's name before she was married." From this time she felt a peculiar interest in the strange gentleman. She looked for him again in the afternoon—he was not there; for several successive Sundays she looked anxiously at the seat where she had seen him—it was always vacant; and she would have entirely forgotten him, had she not sometimes heard the name casually mentioned by the family, or by gossiping visitors.

The next day Vara was formally introduced to a school. It was the best the town afforded, and had been selected by Mr. Hamilton. Now began a routine of life which was very irksome to Vara. She had been accustomed to act without restraint; to follow her own impulse; to be chained down to no regular rules; she wrote or read, or sung, or sewed, or played, as she chose.

Many were the rebukes she received for recklessness, or insubordination. If she had been less advanced in her studies, she would have been dealt with more leniently; but the teachers could not believe that a child who knew so

much could have learned after any but a methodical fashion, and they attributed her frequent misdemeanors to a spirit of culpable heedlessness. They learned, however, after awhile, that the best way was to leave her to herself; and, indeed, before the first quarter ended, she was perfectly broken into the drill of the schoolroom.

Her life was now exceedingly monotonous. She never saw Miss Boyle, except in the church, or in the street; and that young lady, though always kind, never exchanged more than a few hurried words with her.

She shrank from the intimacy of her schoolmates; she was ignorant of their plays, and when she learned them could not get up an interest in them. They regarded her as an odd and wilful girl, and after a few ineffectual attempts to cultivate her acquaintance, they left her alone to do as she chose. Yet all acknowledged that in other respects she was amiable and obliging, and her progress in her studies astonished not only the teachers, but the scholars too, who seldom think any girl entitled to the praise which the teachers pronounce.

At home Vara found little congeniality. Daniel was never unkind, but he was rough and selfish, and had, in spite of all his advantages, an innate vulgarity, that was of all things most repulsive to the perfect refinement of Vara's mind. Mr. Stephens seemed to look upon her as a foolish little girl, unworthy the particular attention of a man of business. He seldom spoke to her, save to reprove her for making a noise, or on certain occasions to read her lectures that she did not understand, about her religious duties. Mrs. Stephens was most indulgent. Every day she and Vara loved each other more and more. Yet Mrs. Stephens evidently did not enter into the child's feelings; did not so much as suspect the thoughts and emotions that were exercising her active mind and sensitive heart, nor did she appreciate her tastes and fancies. She was satisfied that Vara was improving in her studies, and was already able to assist her in many of the homely details of housekeeping; that she was good and pure-hearted, obedient and affectionate; and she supposed, since she heard no complaints, and knew not how it could be otherwise, that Vara was happy.

But Vara was not happy. The light dimmed in her eye. The joyousness of her laugh was gone. Her little face grew pale and grave, as her little hands grew hard and red through the exercise of many manipulations amid plates and cups and saucers in hot water and soap.

Vara was a child of nature, whose genius was cramped by the artificial restraints of the practical work-day, common-place life she now led. She was a caged bird, shut out from all that was beautiful and congenial, closed in by the brick walls of a dusty inland town. Her lively fancy and mental activity found neither aliment nor companionship. There were none to whom she could whisper the "surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions," which were ever starting up in her thoughts, and expiring in their own hazy indistinctness, for the want of some appreciating and capable intellect to lead them out into just sentiments and truthful convictions. Her friends were all of the positive and practical stamp, to whom the imaginative and emotional were as unintelligible as Hebrew and algebra.

She longed for one look at the ocean—for one breath of pure air, laden with the fragrance of the flowers—for the companionship of her own father and mother—for the conversation of cultivated minds—for the society of the untutored Rutea, to whom she might talk her fancies, without fear of exciting unkind remark or stupid wonderment; or for one glimpse of that island-home,—

"Where beauty flung her varied dress
O'er mountain, forest, field and sea,
In rich and splendid brilliancy."

Her most frequent pleasures were to pore over the little book of pictures, sketched by the hand of her own dear father, and to dress again and again in her island costume, and fancy herself once more a nymph of the sea, sitting under the arch of the rainbow on the reef.

Once only had she heard from home. The letters were more precious than gold. She had read them over and

over, till she could repeat them word for word; and she had so spotted them with tears, that at last she resolved to place a taboo upon weeping, while the precious relics were in her hand.

Thus passed five dreary months. It was now mid-winter. The cold penetrated to Vara's heart. The world was icy chilliness to her.

VIII.

Unwelcome Discoveries.

"Henceforth in safe assurance may ye rest,
 Having both found a new friend you to aid,
 And lost an old foe that did you molest :
 Better new friend than an old foe is said."

"Affect not to despise beauty: no one is freed from its dominion."

"A poor relation is—a haunting conscience—an unwelcome remembrancer—a blot on your scutcheon."

It will be remembered that Miss Kate Granger had left the home of Mr. Boyle, on the night of Vara's first arrival in Liberty, in no amiable frame of mind. She found her father sitting by a shaded lamp, with a newspaper in his hand. A cloud was on his brow, and his thoughts seemed painfully active upon some unpleasant subject. In that paper was an announcement to the following effect—

"Arrival of Missionaries.—Rev. John Johnson and wife, and a young daughter of Rev. Alfred Austen, of the Pacific island mission, in ship *Oriental*, *Marvin*."

Mr. Granger's thumb rested on that identical item of news. Was it *that* so occupied his thoughts?

Roderick had retired, in view of his early departure the next morning. Matilda had not yet made her appearance. Kate and Mr. Granger had for some time sat in silence, he suffering some unknown sorrow, she indulging in a foolish fit of angry and uncalled for feeling.

"Pa," at length exclaimed the lady in a sharp tone, that roused the paternal attention at once, "did you have a cousin that married a missionary?"

Mr. Granger turned his eyes with a searching glance on

the girl, but detecting nothing very alarming in her aspect, notwithstanding her peremptory tone, he answered, in a voice that was meant to be very calm, "I had a second cousin that married a missionary."

"Was she rich?" asked the daughter.

"Yes," answered Mr. Granger, with a tone of indifference that seemed to say, "so so—not very."

"Were you her guardian?"

Mr. Granger sprang to his feet, as if a viper had stung him. He looked at his daughter with a fierce defiance in his eye, which would have alarmed her, had she not been too intent nursing her own little irritation of feeling. There she sat, tapping her little foot on the floor, and watching the operation steadfastly with both eyes; and there he stood, scrutinizing her with an expression of mingled anxiety, suspicion, and anger. At length his features relaxed into their customary composure, as if assured that there was no immediate cause of alarm, and in a quiet tone asked, "Why do you wish to know?"

"Oh, we were talking about her to-night. I said she was a dependent of yours, and Adele Boyle said she was your ward."

"How did you happen to speak of her?" asked Mr. Granger again, with apparent calmness.

"Why it seems that a little girl of the name of Austen arrived in town to-day, the daughter of a missionary, and a protégée of Mrs. John Stephens."

"What, here? in this town? are you sure of what you say?"

"Oh, yes, Adele has seen her. Why, sir, you don't suppose she is any relation of ours?" said Kate, looking up with alarm, and first observing the expression of painful interest on the countenance of her father. "If you were her guardian," continued Kate, "her mother of course would have sent her to us, or at least she would have written you about it."

"Of course," said her father. "Oh, no, the child can be no relation of ours. Of course not, of course not," he repeated two or three times, while lighting a lamp, with which he immediately left the room, and Kate heard him

ascend the stairs and enter his own chamber, and might have heard him pacing the floor of that room without cessation for many a long hour that night.

Five months had passed since this conversation. Matilda Granger had become Mrs. Charles Boyle, and had removed to the city of New York. Roderick was again at home to spend the holidays. Kate was more peevish than ever. Her father was more sad. These two were sitting alone one evening, when the letters were brought in, one of which seemed at once to arrest the attention of Mr. Granger, and he immediately withdrew, with that particular letter in his hand, to the library.

It was a letter from Vara's mother. Mr. Johnson had brought it to the country, with directions to forward it to Mr. Granger, as soon as he could ascertain the present residence of that gentleman, who had removed from the city of New York, some years previously. Not till recently had Mr. Johnson obtained the information that Mr. Granger was residing in the very town in which he had placed the dear little Vara. This was the letter—

“— Island, Pacific Ocean, 18— :

“MY DEAR COUSIN,—I write to claim of you what you cannot deny my right to ask—your affectionate interest in my dear, my only child and daughter, whom I am about to entrust, under the guardianship of Heaven, to the care of strangers, of whom I know nothing, except that they are pious and respectable. Their names are Stephens, of the town of Liberty, State of New York. John Stephens is the name of the husband. He is a man in good circumstances—a dry-goods merchant—a man of integrity, though I presume a plain man.

“ You will do me a favour by seeking an introduction to my little girl, and by inviting her sometimes, at least once a year to your house, that those with whom she is placed may know that she has other friends besides themselves, and that I may hear of her from some reliable source out of their immediate family.

“ I know your natural kindness of heart, and am sure, if you once become interested in my child, you will keep a

watchful eye upon her. And now, my dear cousin, I shall require a more strict account of the care you take of my daughter than I have ever asked of the care you took of my fortune. Notwithstanding your long and unaccountable silence, I remain

“Your very affectionate cousin,

“MARY G. AUSTEN.

“P.S.—Mr. Austen unites with me in kindest regards to all your family.”

This letter was read with knit brow and clenched hand. It was evident that the tone of the letter both annoyed and alarmed him. The last sentence he repeated aloud, half, unconsciously. “I shall require a more strict account of the care you take of my daughter than I have ever asked of the care you took of my fortune.” “What can she mean? Does she dare to threaten me? Does she think I cannot give her an account?” “Thank God,” he exclaimed, after some moments of intense and painful thought; “let it come to the worst, and she can prove nothing against me. Yet it were best not to provoke an examination. Would that I could satisfy God as easily as man!” His face settled into a sorrowful calmness, and forthwith he returned to the parlour, and addressed his daughter with a cheerful tone that the reader needs not to be informed was altogether forced.

“Why, Kate, it turns out that the missionary’s daughter, under Mrs. Stephens’ care, is our relative. Her mother wrote to me on the subject when the child first arrived; but, by some mishap, I have only this evening received her letter. I wish you would call upon the little girl, and invite her here.”

Kate heard this intelligence with undisguised vexation. She threw down her work, and her little foot, as usual, when thrown off her equilibrium, which was too often the case, began to pit-a-pat on the floor. At last she asked, “Do you mean to offer this child a home? Do you expect me to bother myself with the care of her?”

“I do not.”

“Then,” she exclaimed, “I shall *not* call on her. If her mother chose to disgrace herself by marrying a mis-

sionary, I don't know that all her relatives, to the fortieth degree, are bound to acknowledge her children; and as for this one, she is living on charity in a vulgar family, and she may live and die there, before I will go to see her."

"Catharine," said her father: it was seldom he answered any of her angry outbreaks; but when he did so, he always gave her the benefit of her full name. "Catherine, I wish you to call upon this child. There are reasons why I wish to show her some attentions."

"Reasons, Pa? Pray, what reason can there be? If you suppose the opinion of the world requires it, I tell you that the world will go further, and say that we ought to give her a home and education. If we take no notice of her, the world will suppose that the relationship is so distant as to be past acknowledgment. But if we acknowledge her at all, family pride should lead us to remove her from a state of dependence on the charity of a common family."

"I feel the force of what you say, Catharine; but I have made up my mind. It is seldom that I insist on my own way, but in this matter I will be obeyed. You cannot go to-morrow, for it is Christmas; but you will go the day after, and invite her to take tea with us in the evening. You understand me?"

"I do, Sir."

"You will go?"

"You have left me no choice."

Kate's foot beat against the grate pan all the evening, and Mr. Granger looked the picture of domestic unhappiness, till the merry voice of Roderick was heard in the entry. Mr. Granger brightened at his appearance, and even Kate, under the pleasant influence of his good humour, seemed desirous to atone for her peevishness, by a degree of amiability and agreeableness which she seldom attained.

The holidays had come. Christmas-day was made happy to Vara by a present from Mrs. Stephens of a writing-desk. "It was just what she wanted." A large part of the day was spent in arranging and re-arranging its contents. She gave the place of honour to the few precious letters she had received, and she already doated in anticipation upon heaps and piles which were to be added to her stock. She tried all

the different kinds of paper and of pens in beginning letters to her mother, to her father, to the other missionaries, and even to Rutea. As if on purpose to fulfil her anticipations, that very afternoon brought her a budget from her island-home. The very first sentence of her mother's letter was so singularly appropriate, that she could not help reading it aloud, a liberty she seldom took in the presence of Mr. Stephens or Daniel, to neither of whom did she ever communicate, voluntarily, any intelligence of her island-home.

But we will give, for the benefit of the reader, not only the first sentence, but the whole of the first paragraph.

"MY OWN DEAR DAUGHTER, MY BELOVED VARA,—According to my calculation, you will receive this some time during the holidays. 'Merry Christmas' to you dear one, and 'a happy New Year.' May the bow of promise shine around you more resplendently, and God give you faith to trust in His covenant. We are very sad without you. We would be disconsolate, did not God impart the comfort of His promises. Our hearts and heads find full employment among these poor, dear heathen, or we might be oftener tempted to mourn and murmur at your absence. But we have our consolations, and one is the confidence we feel that you are under the care of those who love God. Give our best love to Mr. and Mrs. Stephens. Tell Daniel we will love him too, though he has such an aversion to missionaries. But I must give you news of your old friends, Lulu and Onoocoo, the two orphans I received nominally into the number of our servants—though really they are, as I expected, more care than service—are well. Both read, and I am happy to say that both manifest a fear of God and a love to Christ which is very encouraging. Rutea, as I before wrote, has never been herself since you left; yet she grows more affable, and gentle, and rational. She attends the sanctuary every Sunday; she is often seen to sit and weep on the little graves of Willie and Josie; and every afternoon she may be seen to kneel, with her eyes fixed on the rainbow on the reef. Your father once approached near enough to discover that she repeated the Lord's prayer. How she learned it we do not know, unless she has learned it from the Testament you gave

her, and which she never permits to leave her sight. Her Eagle is quite discarded. By no artifice or entreaty can he secure her attention. He is a noble savage. Your father has had some conversation with him, and hopes that he may yet yield to the influence of the Gospel."

Christmas-day had gone. The next day hung heavily on Vara's hands. She no longer had the privilege of retiring to her own little room, for the intense cold drove her from it. The basement was close. The anthracite coal stove produced a sense of depression on both mind and body, that Vara knew not how to account for. The stock of books in Mr. Stephens' library was not large, nor choice, nor attractive. The book Vara had taken from the Sunday-school library had been read. Other children had their play-mates, and their friends, and their relatives. Vara had none. She sewed a little, and she read her letters all over, and then she took to gazing out of the window to watch the sleighs. Away they went. Merrily rang the bells. They dashed by of all sorts, shapes, and sizes. "It would be pleasant," thought Vara, "to ride in one just once; only the terrible cold must mar the enjoyment; and then those hideous skins—I can't bear to look at them—I'm sure I would not dare to touch them." Then she wished Rutea was there to see them—how astonished she would be—and then she wondered if her father and mother did not long to see the bright dazzling snow once more, and then she thought how at that very moment her island-home was blooming in verdant luxuriance, and how the rainbow was fitfully playing over the reef, and she quite forgot all about the sleighs and the snow, and sat drumming on the window-seat, when, all of a sudden, the peal of sleigh-bells, that had been for some time ringing louder and louder as some sleigh came down the street, stopped so instantaneously and changed into a little jingling noise, that Vara, startled out of her thoughts, involuntarily looked up, and there, directly before the window, stood a large sleigh and two prancing horses, and in the sleigh a lady, covered with furs and buried in the richest robes.

Vara hardly took time to make particular observations on this unusual apparition, but rushed into the kitchen to give

timely warning of a visitor to Mrs. Stephens, who was deep in the mystery of boiling dough-nuts, the unsavoury steam and fragrance of which filled the whole house. In a moment she was at the window. "Dear me, it is Mr. Granger's sleigh, and that is Miss Granger. What can she want of me? Run, Vara, to my room, and get my best cap. Sally, take a match, and be sure and light a fire in the parlour-stove before you open the door." (The wood, be it known, was always prepared for lighting in case of some such emergency as the present, in the air-tight stove in the parlour.) While these orders were being given, the door-bell kept up an incessant ringing. Mrs. Stephens thought Vara never had been so slow; she half-wished that she had gone herself. But Vara, nevertheless, fairly flew, as she had not done since she had raced with Rutea on the island beach; and Mrs. Stephens had completed her toilette, and examined and re-examined herself in the glass, long before Sally returned with the unnecessary announcement, 'that Miss Granger would like to see Mrs. Stephens.' It seemed to Mrs. Stephens as if Sally never would open the front door, and then, when that door had been heard to open and shut, and the parlour-door opened too, it seemed as if Sally would never come to call her. Altogether Mrs. Stephens was in a state of unusual excitement; and the moment Sally had descended the stairs, she began their ascent, but was suddenly brought to a stand still by Sally's expostulation, "Plase ma'am—I say—plase—plase ma'am—Mrs. Stephens—I say—plase stop—'tisn't you the lady is after inquiring for; she didn't ask for *you*."

"Didn't ask for me?" said Mrs. Stephens, pausing at last, still half-hesitating whether her ears had not deceived her, and whether she ought not to hasten to the waiting visitor—"didn't ask for me? Whom did she ask for then?"

"Why, she asked for Miss Austen, and I asked her if that was Vara she meant? and she said it was, and she would like to see her."

"What does that mean?" ejaculated Mrs. Stephens, descending the stairs very slowly and reluctantly. "Sally says she wants you, Vara. I think it must be a mistake; but you had better go and see for yourself, I suppose."

Vara, fully as much astonished as Mrs. Stephens, and

not a little frightened, slowly complied, while Mrs. Stephens seated herself to wait the issue, and repeat over and over again, "How strange!—what can it mean?" She was sure it was a mistake, and expected Vara to return every minute and summon her to the parlour. When some time had elapsed, and Vara did not make her appearance, she began to grow vexed. No lady likes to be disappointed in a visitor, especially when they have put on their best cap; and Mrs. Stephens was no exception to the rule. She began now to regard herself as really ill-used. "Well, really," she said, talking aloud to herself, "it is too bad for people to disturb one in the midst of their work. These great folks have no reason about them; they always choose the most inconvenient times for their visits. Seems to me if Miss Granger had any message for Vara, she might have sent it, and not have come herself. I wonder whether it is good manners to come and see a person's child, and not ask to see the mother. *Miss Austen* she said; why couldn't she call her Vara? *Austen*—I never thought of that before. If she is ours, she is ours, and ought to have our name. I wonder if I ought not to tell her that she must call herself Stephens?"

While Mrs. Stephens was meditating this point, the sleigh drove off, and now curiosity to learn the nature and occasion of the visit banished all her reflections, and she impatiently waited till Vara appeared, and gave her a circumstantial account of all that had happened in the little cold parlor, where she and Miss Granger had been shiveringly conversing for some fifteen long formal minutes.

Vara had often heard Miss Granger spoken of as very proud and haughty. She regarded her as an extremely formidable personage, and approached the parlour door with no little trepidation. On entering she found Miss Granger seated as near the stove as she could be. She rose to meet her with a lady-like air, that put Vara at her ease. Yet there was such an apparent indifference in her manner—and such a tone—slight indeed, but yet perceptible to a sensitive child of quick apprehension—of a contemptuous superiority—that Vara felt herself put upon the most formal relations.

"Is this Miss Austen—Vara Austen?" asked the lady.

"Yes," said Vara, in her natural easy manner, accepting

her proffered hand; "did you wish to see me—or my mother?"

"Your mother? Whom do you call your mother?"

"Mrs. Stephens."

"So you call *her* mother, do you."

"To be sure I do; why should I not?" said Vara with some indignation at the slighting tone in which Miss Granger asked.

"Well, Vara, you may call her what you please; but"—trying to speak very winningly—for she saw that she had roused the pride of the little girl—"you must call me *cousin*,"—Vara started,—"*for my father and your grandfather were cousins—so we are cousins you know, though to be sure very distant.*"

These last words were spoken with an emphasis too peculiar to escape Vara's detection. The subject evidently interested the child, and yet she as evidently felt no pleasure in finding that the great Miss Granger was her cousin. A grown woman, practised in the ways of the world, could not have answered with more self-possession than Vara did.

"I suppose, then," said she, "that your father was my mother's guardian; and if so, why has he not been to see me before this? My mother always loved him *so much*, and she said that he would love *me*."

It was now Miss Granger's turn to be a little confused; for she could not help suspecting that her father had purposely ignored the little girl. However, she answered according to apparent facts. "Why, it is very singular, but he never knew till night before last that you were in town. It was then that he first received the letter which your mother wrote to him when you first came."

This subject being exhausted, Miss Granger spoke of the cold, asked some common-place questions about how she liked the country, and when she had heard from her parents; to all of which Vara gave civil, but short answers.

At last she rose to go, and it was not till her hand was on the door-knob, that she informed Vara, as if she had just thought of it, that her father desired her to come and take tea, and spend the evening with them. The sleigh would come for her at four o'clock, and bring her home again in the evening.

"If you will wait a minute," said Vara, "I will ask my mother if I can go."

"Oh of course," answered Miss Granger, proudly, "*she* will make no objection; and indeed I have not time to wait now;" and passing out of the front room, she turned as she entered the sleigh, and repeated, "the sleigh will call at four. Good-bye."

Rapidly the sleigh dashed out of sight. Slowly Vara turned the key in the door, closed the draught in the parlour stove, darkened the windows, and returned to the impatient Mrs. Stephens, half wishing that Mrs. Stephens would forbid her accepting the invitation, and yet curious to see that cousin whom her own dear mother loved as her only surviving relative. "Strange," thought she, "this very morning I was wishing for a ride in a sleigh, and now that I am likely to have one, I dread it. I wonder how those robes do really feel." Vara's account to Mrs. Stephens of the visit, was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Polly Williams.

"Do tell now, Mrs. Stephens, what did Miss Granger want of you this morning? I see her sleigh stop here, and when she got out and went in, I was clear beat. I thought she never would come out again, and I've left my baking in the oven, and run over in my duds, just as I was. Do tell! what's in the wind, and quick too, for I must be back to look after my baking."

"Why Aunt Polly," said Vara, willing to mystify the good old lady, "if relatives visit each other, is that anything strange?"

"Relatives, indeed. I'd like to know what relatives them Grangers got, that ain't as rich and grand as—as—a body don't dare look at 'em? I say, what did she come here for?"

"Why, Aunt Polly, suppose Miss Granger should happen to be my cousin."

"There haint no supposin' to it. That ugly, proud Kate Granger, ain't no kith or kin of yourn."

"Now, Aunt Polly, she is not ugly, though she may be proud; and she is *my cousin*—that is, a very distant cousin—her father is my mother's second cousin, and the nearest

relative, except me and my father, that she has in the world."

Mrs. Williams lifted up both hands. "Law sakes! you don't tell? who'd a thought it? But how long has it took to find this here relationship out. Seems to me they might have come to see their cousin Vara before this."

"Why they did not know that I was in the country till night before last; and I never knew they were my cousins, you know."

"Well, now that they've found it out, I spose they'll be taking you to live with them. Such grand people hadn't oughter leave their relatives dependent like on folks they look down on."

Vara not comprehending this worldly wise remark, which Mrs. Williams evidently meant to be very satirical, proceeded to inform Aunt Polly of the invitation to tea.

"Do you mean to let her go, Mrs. Stephens?" asked Aunt Polly.

Mrs. Stephens answered very deliberately, "I had thought of doing so, Mrs. Williams, but what you just said leads me to hesitate. What if they should wish to take Vara? I could not refuse, but—but—" and the good lady burst into tears. Vara's arms were round her neck in a moment, and again and again she kissed her—between every word, as she vehemently declared her love and determination never to be separated from her.

"Dear, dear mother, take me from you?—that they sha'n't; you know I love you better—better than any body in the world, except my own dear father and mother; and, except I go to them, I'd leave you to go to nobody."

"But, Vara," said Mrs. Stephens, more calmly, "you've not yet seem them. You don't know how beautiful is everything they have. Do you think you'll be able to withstand the temptation, if they should invite you to live with them."

"Dear mother," said Vara, in that sweetly earnest voice so peculiar to a pious child in speaking on holy subjects: "I will tell you what my own mother told me the last day I ever spent with her. We were sitting on the little graves of my brother and sister—she on Willie's—I on Josie's; and she told me I must remember these words: 'Be not conformed

to this world,' and 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' and she asked me if I was sure I could remember them, and I pointed to the rainbow on the reef as a sign that I would, for I had chosen that rainbow as a sign of my baptism, and given up unto God to be His, in His covenant; and now do you think that all the pomp and vanity of this world would tempt me to forsake this Christian home and you, dear Christian mother, for their worldly ways and grandeur?"

Never had Mrs. Stephens heard the child make so long a speech. She did not know that she was capable of such deep sentiments and strong adherence to principles; she felt greatly assured, and gave her unhesitating consent to the visit.

Here, however, another difficulty suggested itself—what should she wear? The new brown silk frock, made out of an old one of Mrs. Stephens', was not quite finished; but if she stopped to finish that, she would not have time to iron the only nice cambric apron Vara had, and to flute the ruffles. Aunt Polly forgot her baking, and agreed to do the apron, if Mrs. Stephens would finish the frock; while Vara attended to the dough-nuts, and burned her pretty face over the fire.

"So, Kate, you have seen our little cousin; how do you like her?" asked Roderick, as they sat at the dinner-table that day. "I never was so anxious to see any one in my life. What do you think Adele Boyle says? She says she has known from the very first that Vara was our cousin, and she is so glad that we have found it out, for now she can visit her?"

"Pray, Roderick"—Kate's foot was agitated—"cannot Miss Boyle visit any who are not *our* relatives?"

"Nonsense, Kate; what is the use of catching up one's words so! Adele says that Mr. Boyle forbid any intimacy, for he said that our father could not but know that the little girl was his near relative; and if we did not recognize her as such, it would be awkward for us to meet her at their house, as we must do if she and Adele were intimate."

"How very considerate our friends are of our feelings!" said Kate.

"My son," said Mr. Granger, who had betrayed a painful interest in the conversation, "I hope you told Mr. Boyle that I did not receive her mother's letter till the day before yesterday, and therefore could not know of the relationship, or even know"—Mr. Granger hesitated for a second, "that there was a child of that name in the town."

"Oh, yes, father, I told him all; and Adele is so happy, and —"

"I hope you told him that she is not 'a *near* relative,' but a very distant one," interrupted his sister.

"I told him no such thing, Kate; for if she is so beautiful and lovely as Adele represents her to be, I wish to make the distance between us no greater than I can help. But you have not answered my question—how do *you* like her?"

"You think so highly of Adele's opinion, I am surprised that you should consult any other person's taste."

"Now, Kate, you know that I think a great deal of *your* opinion, when it is not biased by —" he looked at her archly, stole close to her side, and whispered in her ear, "your naughty pride;" and though Kate struggled against them, he gave her a dozen kisses.

Kate was vexed, but somehow she never could be angry with Roderick, and the matter ended, as it usually did, with a playful pout and a sprinkling of ejaculations, which might be taken either in fun or earnest.

"Now, dear Kate," said Roderick once more, when he saw that good humour had carried the day, "do please tell me what *you* think of Vara Austen."

"Well," said Kate, assuming a tone of indifference, "I must say she is pretty, *very* pretty, although horribly dressed; her manners are better than I supposed they would be, but then I had expected to find her intensely vulgar; I judge, too, however 'lovely' in Adele's opinion, she has a spice of *my* 'naughty pride,' Roderick. Indeed, now that you force me to recall the impression she has left upon my mind, for I have hardly thought about the child at all since I saw her this morning, I would say, that in appearance,

manners, and character, she very much resembles the Grangers. How strangely family likenesses are discovered in the most remote branches!"

"Why, Kate," said her father, "the little girl is as much of a Granger as you are, save in name; indeed," and he smiled, "she is the representative of an older branch of the family, for her grandfather was the eldest son, while my father was the youngest. But," he added more seriously, "I wish, Kate, you would relinquish the practice of talking about family; it is not American; and remember, my child," and there was a slight tremor in his voice, "if honour is inheritable, so is disgrace;" and so saying he rose from the table and left the room.

Roderick went out to order his sleigh, and Kate threw herself on the lounge to dream over the last novel.

Long before four o'clock, Vara was dressed in the brown silk and the cambric apron, which Mrs. Stephens acknowledged that she herself could not have "done up" more beautifully. The ugly steel long-comb, which Mrs. Stephens insisted on her wearing ordinarily, was now laid aside, much to the chagrin of that good lady, who regarded it as very ornamental, and her hair, unrestrained by comb or ribbon, fell in a profusion of brown curls over her shoulders, and concealed the ill effect of the high-necked dress, the snuffy colour of which was enlivened by the white apron; the coarse school-shoes and blue worsted stockings which she had worn in the morning, after much entreaty were also rejected, and, notwithstanding the shapeless pantelets that hung around them, stiff and shiny with starch, her little feet looked charmingly pretty in cotton hose and summer slippers. Vara's natural taste had prevailed against the advice and remonstrances of Mrs. Stephens in all the arrangements of her simple toilette, and if her dress added nothing to her beauty, it did no discredit to her taste.

Aunt Polly, when Vara at last descended to the basement where the good old soul was waiting to see and help her off, regarded her with undisguised admiration, and yet Aunt Polly was not altogether satisfied with the existing state of things.

"I wish, Vara, you wasn't dressed so well. I don't know how it is, but seems to me, you never looked so purty and gintile like ;—you haint got nothin on to set you off nuther,—no comb,—no beads,—no breast-pin,—no bows,—no nothin, but jist that snuff-coloured dress and that little rag of an apron, and yet you do look so purty, so ginteel, so kinder lady-like, that I am jist afeard," and the old lady wiped her eyes with the corner of her check apron, "them great folks will be a hankering arter you, and will be a taking you away from us clean altogether."

"Oh, pshaw! Aunt Polly," but the words were interrupted by the jingling of bells and the prancing of horses. All hands were now busy in muffling her up, to protect her from the cold ; Aunt Polly caught her up in her brawny arms, and, before the child could speak or mutter, had deposited her, with a hearty smack from her lips, in the midst of the great buffalo skins. The whip cracked ; the horses flew over the ground ; Vara hardly knew whether to laugh or cry ; she was all in a tremor : the robes were so soft and warm, and yet she could not bear to touch them, they looked so savage ; the motion was so easy and delightful, and yet when the sleigh slid round the corners, she feared every minute that she should be thrown out ; but it seemed to her a mere second of time, and the sleigh glided in at the gate-way, between the trees, up the circular avenue, and stopped in front of the door of Mr. Granger's mansion.

As Vara tripped up the steps, she could not help wishing that Miss Granger was more like sweet Adele Boyle, and she sighed to think how long a time had elapsed since she had seen that young lady. Most children unaccustomed to the magnificence of wealth, would have been appalled at the size of the house and the splendour of its furniture. Not so Vara. She was too inartificial ; nor had she yet learned, that by being the child of Mr. John Stephens, she was the inferior of those who lived in stylish houses and moved in modish society, and should, therefore, when accidentally brought in contact with them, feel shy, awkward, and out-of-place. On the contrary, all that she saw so harmonized with her natural taste for the beautiful, gorgeous, and luxurious, that she was sensible only of a feeling of childish

delight, and was much more at her ease than in the ill-furnished houses of her plainer friends and acquaintance.

When the servant threw open the parlour-door, Vara cast a glance of admiration around the spacious room, and was so carried away with the excitement of the moment, that, before she knew it, she volunteered to kiss the stately Miss Granger. That young lady, for once in her life, was taken aback. She had intended to treat Vara with a cool civility, and to do as little to entertain her as possible: she hoped that the child would find the afternoon long and dreary, and thus be deterred from the wish to repeat her visits very often. But Miss Kate was dealing with no common child. If she had been ever so distant and silent, Vara would never have tired or failed of amusement in that great house, where there were so many pictures to look at, and so many books to read. She could have sat all day long, coiled up in a corner of that capacious sofa, or fairly hidden in the depths of that deep arm-chair, dreaming golden visions of fairy-land, or painting to herself regal scenes of oriental opulence. But Vara, unconsciously, had put herself on an equality with Miss Granger, and the latter, in spite of her resolutions, was obliged to acknowledge her claims; nor could she resist the artless winsomeness of the child; she had been pleased with her in the morning; she was more than pleased now. She was charmed—she was captivated.

“I must take you to see my father,” she said; “we can step into the library before we go up stairs to remove your cloak and bonnet.” They stepped across the hall to that apartment. “Your name is Vara—what a singular name?”

“Do you think it pretty?”

“Yes, rather so; but how did you come by it?”

“Mother gave it to me, because that was the name of the first heathen converted to Christianity through my father’s labours.”

Miss Granger resumed the expression of illtemper that had disappeared from her face; she uttered an impatient “pshaw,” but that might have been because she did not find her father in the library. She said she would seek him in

the conservatory, and be back immediately ; and so saying, she left Vara alone.

Vara gazed upon the loaded book-shelves with wonder. Her eye in its course rested upon a picture over the mantel-piece : it was the portrait of a gentleman in middle life. She was strangely attracted to it. " I wonder," she said to herself, " if every one thinks him so handsome as I do." Just then her eye fell upon a picture on the opposite side of the room. It was a full-length, under-sized portrait of a young woman. Vara almost screamed with delight when she saw it. High steps, such as are used in libraries, happened to stand directly under the picture. Vara ran to them, clambered up, and took her seat on the very topmost step of all. She kissed the picture again and again. " Oh, can it be !—can it be ! " she exclaimed, talking aloud to herself ; " oh, how beautiful ; seems to me it looks like myself, only I know I am not beautiful ; but then it is such a foolish young thing,—it has not that sweet, grave look ; oh ! I wish some one would tell me who it is ; I could not bear to take any one else for *her* ! " Just then an advancing step caused Vara to turn her head. She had thrown off her hood ; her cloak had slipped from her shoulders ; her attitude was that of matchless grace ; her face was flushed ; her eye sparkled ; her ringlets shook with agitation ;—

" O, sir," she exclaimed, as her eye fell on the grave face of an elderly gentleman, gazing up at her with rivetted attention ; " please, please tell me, if this is—is—?"

" Your mother," answered the calm, deep voice of Mr. Granger.

Vara burst into tears. Mr. Granger seemed equally excited on his part as herself. He and Roderick had entered the library by one door as Kate left it by another. Both had stood in silence watching the child up to this moment : Roderick lost in admiration, his father discomposed by a conflict of emotions, and afraid to trust his voice to speak. Now, however, he caught the child in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom in a paroxysm of affection that startled Roderick, who had never witnessed such an outburst of feeling in his usually staid and sober father, and, we may say, never did again.

Vara's tears were soon dry. She felt at home in Mr. Granger's arms. She was happier than she had been since she parted with her own dear parents.

"My mother, my own mother," she said, "bid me tell you, sir, the first time I should see you, how dearly she loved you, and she bade me love you too, if you would let me; may I love you, sir?"

"Certainly, my child, you not only may, but *must*. Do you mind that now—you *must* love me, and take care," he added, smiling, "how you love any one else, for I shall be very jealous;" and putting her hand into Roderick's, who had stood, up to this moment, an unobserved spectator, he said, "This is your cousin, Roderick: he will take you now to see the observatory. Go along with you! But, wait a minute; I saw you looking at this picture," pointing to the one over the mantel-piece; "this is the likeness of your grandfather, my only cousin."

"Is it not singular, sir," she replied, "that I felt a love for that picture so soon as I saw it? But please tell me," she asked, with the utmost simplicity, "do I look like that picture of my mother? I never thought that I looked like her; but, it seems to me, there is some resemblance in that to me. I know *that* is very beautiful; of course I am not." Truthfulness itself beamed in her face as she said this.

"Well, really," answered Mr. Granger, with a serio-comic air, "it is surprising, considering how homely you are; but you do resemble it very much. You have not the same kind of eyes, for your eyes are like your father's, and your features, it is true, have not the same classical regularity, nor your figure that elegance; indeed you are quite ugly compared with that," and Mr. Granger laughed outright.

"Wait till she is as old," exclaimed Roderick, reddening with indignation.

"Pray, how old do you suppose her mother was when that portrait was painted?"

"Well, I should say about seventeen or eighteen."

"No, sir, she was twenty-three; but all the charms of girlhood were still hers in mind and heart as well as in person."

"I have not seen my father," whispered Roderick to Vara, as they left the library, hand in hand, "so cheerful in a great, great while."

Mr. Granger, like Kate, had been driven from his tactics. He dreaded seeing the child, for reasons best known to himself. He had resolved to act the cross old man towards her, and to encourage no familiarity whatever. But the scene in the library had taken his heart by storm. She had opened anew the founts of affections which had been long sealed, and in so doing, she had awakened hopes, aspirations, and confidences, which had long been strangers to his bosom. He was that night stronger and happier than he had been in five months, yea, than in years.

Happily to Vara passed the afternoon and evening. Cheerily rang the sleigh-bells in the clear, cold night. Roderick was by her side, and the rogue took a cousin's privilege, and kissed her good-night as he parted with her at the basement door.

New Friends and New Habits.

"We cannot all be top branches of the tree, though we all spring from the same root."

THE next morning a note from Adele Boyle, addressed to Mrs. Stephens, was received. It was an invitation for Vara, "if Mrs. Stephens had no objection," to spend the day with Adele, to meet her cousins the Grangers.

"Miss Boyle is a lady, a real lady," exclaimed Mrs. Stephens, when she had read the note. "*She* would not ask you directly, Vara, but makes the request properly of me."

Vara blushed for her cousin Kate, for she understood the allusion.

"Ma," said Vara, "it seems like crowding too much happiness into one week. On Christmas-day you gave me that beautiful writing-desk, and those delightful letters came from my island-home; yesterday I passed so pleasantly at Cousin Granger's; and now, to-day, I am to see dear Adele Boyle once more."

But "Ma" did not answer, and Vara, looking up, saw a tear gathering in her eye. She was by her side in a moment, and her earnest eyes were gazing with unutterable affection into Mrs. Stephens' face. "Dear ma', the only thing that is wanting to make me perfectly happy, is to have you with me; and now, if you please, when I come to think of it, I would rather not go to Mr. Boyle's to-day. I will put it off till another time, and we will pass this day cozily at home."

"You dear child, do you think I would keep you moping at home all the time? no, no. It is precious little enjoyment that you have had since you have lived with us, and I will not deprive you of the little that now offers. Besides," as she saw that Vara was disposed to insist on staying at home, "these holidays will soon be

over, and then you can see as much of me as you wish ; and, more than all, it would be treating Miss Boyle rudely to refuse her kind invitation, and I would do anything in my power to manifest my love and respect for that young lady."

The last argument evidently had more weight with Vara than any other. The invitation was accepted. Mrs. Stephens, notwithstanding her urgency, seemed almost sorry that she had prevailed ; she looked sad, and was gentler to Vara than ever.

The holidays were full of happiness for Vara. One day she enjoyed a long drive in Mr. Granger's large sleigh with Kate, Adele and Roderick, and drank tea in the evening at Mr. Boyle's. Another day Roderick drove her out in his own sleigh, with his little Canadian pony, and took her to his father's to tea. Every day, indeed, had its peculiar pleasure in the midst of her new relatives and friends. Nor was Sunday unmarked ; for Mr. Granger once more made his appearance in church. Everybody saw that he looked even graver and gloomier than of old ; but Vara saw that he smiled very sweetly upon her, and as she stood up in prayer, she was conscious all the while that his eyes were fixed immovably upon her, though he could see nothing but her bonnet, for she purposely bent down her head, and covered her whole face with her handkerchief.

On New Year's morning Vara snatched a little time, after she had given due assistance to Mrs. Stephens in sundry household matters, to begin a letter to her own parents. She could not write much, for she had promised to go to cousin Granger's early and spend the whole day there, as it was the last day Roderick would be at home till the spring vacation.

The letter began in this wise :

"MY OWN DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—The bow of promise shines upon me more brightly this New Year's morning, than it ever has done since I parted from you. As you, dear father, so often say, 'we must have rain and gloom before the bow appears upon the clouds,' so I

have had but a sad time since I have been here: not that I ought to complain; for, if the sky has been darkened, it might have been much darker, and many bright beams of light has a Heavenly Father let down into my heart—but now this bright, bright day, the clouds have broken all away, and the rainbow is so beautiful; oh, dear father, dear mother, I am so happy.”

And thus the letter, which was long in finishing, and recounted with minuteness the incidents of the week, reflected throughout the rainbow tints of childish happiness. The dull monotony of her former life gave her a zest for the new pleasures which had so unexpectedly been showered around her. Even little things were magnified into great felicities, and what would hardly have awakened a smile of gratification in others, filled Vara's heart with overflowing delight.

“ There are a thousand joyous things in life,
Which pass unheeded in a life of joy
As thine hath been, till breezy sorrow comes
To ruffle it.”

Happy as Vara was, she suffered one unpleasant drawback. Daniel was thoroughly selfish; not wantonly bad—indeed he had some very kind feelings and occasional spasms, as Vara called them of goodness; but self with him was always considered first and last. So long as Vara was an unnoticed, uncared-for little girl, Daniel was indifferent to her. Once or twice only had he manifested impatience when his mother had seemed to prefer her to him, “Mother,” he once said, “one would suppose that Vara was your own child, and I your adopted child.” “Daniel,” she answered, with an emphasis he never forgot, “never say that again. God has given us Vara in the place of Anna. She is *our own* child, *our own* child, Daniel, as much as you are.” But now that Vara was the object of attentions, from which he was excluded, Daniel more frequently betrayed a jealous and envious disposition.

When Vara returned from Mr. Boyle's the night after Christmas, she began, the moment she entered the room, to give a full account to Mrs. Stephens of her visit with

childish volubility, taking off her bonnet, cloak, and mufflers, as she talked, and throwing them on a chair. She did not observe the glum countenance of Daniel, for she was not over fond of observing that youth.

"Really, Vara," he exclaimed at last, "I should think your great friends might have invited me too! I am your brother; and brothers usually go with their sisters."

There was something in the mental association of Daniel with the Grangers and the Boyles, that struck Vara as singularly ludicrous. It was altogether a new idea: some faint perception of the sad truth that Daniel was as unlike herself, or the Grangers, or the Boyles, or even his own mother, as vulgarity can be unlike natural or cultivated refinement. She had always *felt* this: but she had never before analyzed the feelings; she did not quite understand it now. As the gawky youth sat opposite to her, his arms sprawled out on the table and his feet tucked under his chair, his greased yellow ear-locks standing out from the sides of his head, and his big goggle-eyes protruding from his face, Vara could not help contrasting him with Roderick Granger: "What is it that makes the difference?" she said to herself, "how queerly he wears his hair. I never observed it before; and then his stock and his collar,—I wish I remembered how Roderick wears his." All this passed through Vara's mind in a flash; yet it so completely diverted her thoughts from Daniel's question, that she broke out, as if she had not heard it, into the exclamation:

"Why, Daniel, I never noticed it before, but, seems to me, you dress your hair in a very strange fashion; why do you not comb it down straight and let it fall in locks, as Roderick Granger's does?"

"Roderick Granger's!" exclaimed Daniel, with infinite contempt, "do you think that I would be such a coxcomb as he is?"

"Coxcomb? what does that mean?"

"Why it means a dandy,—a puppy,—one that thinks about his dress, and prinks before the glass, and all that!" Oh! the mortal hours that Daniel had wasted in these edifying employments!

"Well, really, Daniel," retorted Vara, with some tart-

ness, "if one can judge by appearances, it must take you a great while longer to fix your hair in that fashion, than ever Roderick spends on his. Why, his clothes look as if he never thought about them at all; but yours,—why yours—" but Vara's descriptive powers were not equal to the peculiarity of Daniel's dress.

"Well, mine what?" cried Daniel, with a very red face, rising from his chair and impatiently stamping with his foot, and knocking the table with his clenched hand, "mine what? miss minx! mine what? I say!"

"Oh! Daniel, I did not mean anything,—I am sorry—"

"Sorry or not, you did mean something. You meant to compare me with that impertinent fool, who is too proud to speak to me, and yet can kiss you almost before my face,—I saw him do it, I did. I tell you what I think; if these grand people are your relatives, and yet are above associating with us, they had better take you to live with them. But if father and mother are to be at the expense and trouble of taking care of you, they ought not to let you visit people who put such notions into your head, and make you ashamed of your own brother! That's what I think."

Vara was in tears before this violent speech was half finished, and fortunately was sobbing too loudly to catch the meaning of the last part.

Mr. Stephens looked at his son in dumb consternation. He felt that he ought to say, or do something; but Mr. Stephens was not equal to such an emergency. At such times his talents shone in a masterly inactivity. Mrs. Stephens was of another stamp. Her eyes flashed with indignation, and nothing could exceed the sarcasm of her intonations, as she turned upon Daniel and said: "If, Sir, you have wounded the feelings of this little helpless girl enough, you can take your light and go to bed, and reflect with shame, as I do, upon your own meanness."

Sulkily Daniel withdrew. The breach between him and Vara was wider than ever. Perhaps Mrs. Stephens had not pursued the most judicious course; who knows that any other would have been more successful?

From that night Vara never alluded to the Grangers or the Boyles in the presence of Daniel, if she could help it.

"Taboo, taboo, taboo," said she to herself; "oh, how many things are taboo. I do not see why I may not speak out all that is in my heart; I am sure it would not hurt any body," and so thinking Vara cried herself to sleep that night.

"The rainbow on the smiling heaven
Is in a moment dying."

The day after New Year's, Roderick left for school, and Vara resumed attendance at her own. But she was no longer pale, or downcast. The colour came back to her cheeks, and the joyousness to her laughter.

She visited the Grangers frequently. She always spent Saturday with them. Her company contributed so evidently to the cheerfulness of Mr. Granger, that Kate, who had become alarmed at the great depression of his spirits, was glad to have the little missionary visit her as often as possible. She once even suggested her permanent residence with them; but this proposition was so peremptorily rejected by her father, and he was so much more melancholy for several days afterwards, that she never ventured to allude to the subject again. She had supposed that her own wilful temper had prevented Vara's adoption into the family circle; she now learned that there was some other and weightier objection, the nature of which she could not divine. This, on the whole, was an advantage to Vara; for Kate, who had a habit of romancing, ever after regarded the child with mysterious respect, as if some great secret of the Granger family history were locked up in her being.

Almost every day Vara saw Adele Boyle, who volunteered to give her lessons in music and drawing, in both of which accomplishments she proved the aptest of scholars. Mrs. Stephens, delighted with her proficiency, promised her a piano, a promise dictated by policy no less than love, for the whole aim and effort of Mrs. Stephens now was to make Vara's home attractive, and diminish, as far as possible, the contrast between her home and the homes of her stylish friends.

When the summer came, not only was the piano pur-

chased, but the whole house underwent a thorough transformation. It was extended some twenty feet in the rear, and raised another story in height. Instead of the little parlour and smaller bed-room, there were now two large and handsome parlours on the first floor, separated by sliding doors, ornamented with marble mantles and French windows, opening on a little iron balcony in front, and a large piazza in the rear, one end of which was enclosed with glass, to serve as a small conservatory.

These changes had been long in contemplation. Mr. Stephens could well afford to make them, and was desirous that they should be made, not because he craved additional conveniences, for he did not, but because he wished—good man—that the community should have some intimation of the increasing depths of his purse. Nevertheless, if Vara had not come to Liberty, or if she had never become intimate with the Grangers and the Boyles, and thus awakened the jealous affections of Mrs. Stephens, it is doubtful whether these changes would ever have been accomplished, so contented were Mr. and Mrs. Stephens with the style of living to which they had always been accustomed.

Vara's taste was consulted in the purchase and arrangement of the furniture, and Miss Adele Boyle's more practised judgment was solicited in all doubtful matters. In the new parlours the place of "the missionary's daughter" in black silk was appropriately filled with a charming likeness of Vara in the costume of the island nymph, drawn in pastel by Miss Boyle. Mr. and Mrs. Stephens were persuaded to sit for their portraits to a respectable artist, whose productions were more worthy of the splendid gilt frames. The Missionary Society's certificates and the little red box mysteriously disappeared amid the confusion of building, and never were found again; but in their place, one bright summer morning, the very day that Vara was twelve years old, what was her ecstasy to discover in the new parlour, hanging up as if they had always been there, the portraits of her own mother and of her grand-father, a birth-day present from Cousin Granger. "How kind!"

The little front room over the entry, considerably enlarged, passed into the possession of Daniel, and Vara was

transferred to the large front room over the parlour. Here the affection of her mother seemed to exhaust her ingenuity and energy, in devising and executing whatever might contribute to the comfort or pleasure of the little girl. Here were shelves for her books, a small table for her writing desk, a larger table for her drawing apparatus, besides bureau and wardrobe, and "everything she had ever wished for." Here she could sit and read, write, sew or draw, at pleasure. It was her room, never invaded by any but her ever welcome mother; and in winter time a box stove was added to keep it warm.

The Stephens' family soon discovered the effects of their "coming out in the world," as Aunt Polly called it. They were regarded as persons of consideration, by many who before had hardly condescended to notice them at all. Mr. Stephens was advanced to the eldership in the church, and was called to a membership in the first common council, the town of Liberty being now preferred to the honour of a corporate city.

Even Daniel spruced up. He put himself into the hands of a competent tailor and capable barber. He even received some of Vara's timid suggestions concerning dress and manners, with acquiescence. But he never could overcome his peculiar passion for pomatum, nor could he conquer an unmistakable swagger in his carriage. Vara contrived to introduce him once or twice, both at the Boyles and the Grangers; but, though for her sake, civilly treated, it was evident to her quick perceptions, that she never could establish him at either place on terms of intimacy. Daniel's perceptions being as dull as his sensibilities were blunt, Vara had no little difficulty in restraining him from presuming on his acquaintanceship; and he, unfortunately, was confirmed by her efforts in the belief that she was ashamed of him.

X.

Darkenings.

“So live, that, when thy summons comes to join
 The innumerable caravan, that moves
 To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take
 His chamber in the silent halls of death,
 Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
 Scourged to his dungeon ; but sustained and soothed
 By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
 Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
 About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

It was Christmas-day again. Vara never had received so many presents. Unbeknown to her, a box from her island-home had arrived a short time before. It was now produced and opened amidst great glee and curiosity. It contained a native robe of the finest tappa, woven by the hands of Rutea, and a large and beautiful fan of the feathers of native birds skilfully arranged by the same hands, “to remind the little birdie that when her feathers were fully grown, she must fly back to her island-home.” There was a hideous idol and specimens of barbaric war-weapons, for Daniel ; a copy of the New Testament in the native language, for Mr. Stephens ; and a quantity of preserved tropical fruits, prepared after West India receipts, for Mrs. Stephens. There was a satin bag, exquisitely embroidered by her own mother, for Vara herself ; the device on one side was the same which Vara had worked on the book-mark, only more elaborate and perfect in colouring,—the rainbow on the reef encircling the name “Vara ;” on the other side was a bouquet of flowers, so gorgeous in colouring, so admirable in form, that Vara could hardly help believing them real. There was a large collection of shells and corals, for Vara to present to her friends and relatives, including a variety of curious *snails*, a special present to Aunt Polly. The old

lady hardly knew whether to laugh or cry at their reception. "What upon arth, Vara," she exclaimed, "can sich an old sinner as I am expect. I've a mind to cram 'em down my own throat. I'll keep 'em any how, and when my tongue wags 'gainst missionaries agin, I'll look at them things, and I'll teach it, I will, to wag at a snail's pace."

But what Vara valued more than all the contents of the box, were precious letters full of love. One of them, in broken English and broken chirography, too, was from Rutea. We subjoin it as a characteristic of the writer.

"Rutea love her birdie ever same. Rutea sit under the bow of true God's love and promise, true believer, happy in the blessed Jesus. Rutea's Eagle look now at the Sun of Righteousness. Waters of holy baptism sprinkle us both; both eat the supper of love, married together in Jesus; both hope to see birdie fly back again, a messenger of Gospel peace, and all fly away together to Heavenly paradise. Let the birdie pray for her.

"RUTEA."

Mr. Austen's letter gave a detailed account of Rutea's conversion, her present docility, her ambitious desire to improve, her marriage to the Eagle after his conversion, and her unvarying attachment to Vara. Mrs. Austen's was the letter of a mother. Her quick eye descried with a mother's solicitude, in the glimpses afforded by Vara's letters, the faults, virtues, and even peculiarities of her daughter's friends. Cautions, counsels, love and sympathy, made up the substance of her epistle.

Hardly had Vara finished the first reading of these letters, when Roderick made his appearance. He brought pretty gifts for Vara from his sister and himself, and a guitar with a *blue* ribbon from his father. Adele, too, sent her memento, and what a sweet one it was—a drawing of the church-yard, with little Anna's grave in the foreground. It was just the size of the frame in which the sepulchral urn had so long been treasured—a sure evidence that the suggestion was Vara's; nor could Mrs. Stephens have been more touched by any offering.

But Roderick would not allow Vara time to inspect her presents so fully as she could have wished; he had brought a request from his father that Vara might spend the holidays with them, and an invitation from Kate to Daniel to be one of the party of young people at their house that evening. His messages delivered, Roderick hurried Vara off, as if life depended on immediate despatch.

Vara's holidays were not spent so merrily as the last. Mr. Granger's mental depression had long been preying upon his bodily health. He was now a confirmed invalid. Early in the fall the physicians had ordered him to a warmer climate; but he, most perversely, as his friends thought, refused to act upon their advice. He was now confined to his room. Vara's presence did much to cheer him. She had brought her new guitar, and her simple sweet songs were most grateful to the sick man's ear: unformed as her voice was, and imperfect as was her playing, her music already had a character in it—a pathos and a wildness which proved that she was not insensible to the “living spirit in the lyre.”

“May I read a little to you to-day, Cousin Granger?” said Vara, the second day of her visit.

“Yes, little one, I love to hear your voice.”

“But may I read the Bible to you?”

“You could not read a better book.”

“Do you *love* the Bible, Cousin Granger?”

“They who practise it, love it, child.”

“Practise it?”

“Yes. Those who do their duty to God and man—whose children shall rise up and call them blessed”—a sigh—“who injure not the orphan”—and Mr. Granger closed his eyes, and seemed to be suffering intense pain.

Vara did not speak for several minutes; at length, seeing him more composed, she ventured to resume the subject.

“Cousin Granger, all good people, to be sure, love the Bible; but it does seem to me that some people, who are not so good as they ought to be, love the Bible, too—love it *dearly*.”

"Do you know any body who is not good who loves the Bible?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, in a subdued tone, "I love it myself."

"But *you are* good!"

"Now, Cousin Granger, you mean to shame me. You saw how angry I was the other day, when Kate spoke rudely of Daniel. I did very, very wrong."

"My dearest child, if *you* have such a sense of sin, how can such an one as *I* hope to be saved?"

"Why Cousin Granger! if it was not a sin to think so, I should suspect that you had never read the Bible. The very reason we have for loving the Bible, is that we are sinners, for the Bible tells us how sin may be pardoned and the sinner saved. Please let me read to you what my own father marked in my little Bible; he told me that those words were the greatest comfort to him in his missionary work, that he could have."

In her clear voice, with all the enthusiasm of her excitable nature, she read those verses in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, which begin with these words: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life."

When the passage was finished, she paused, expecting her cousin to make some remark. He continued silent and thoughtful. She took up her guitar, and with a few gentle touches by way of symphony, sung to a quaint methodistical tune, the verses of a rude, but expressive hymn.

"We all have sinned against our God;
Exception none can boast;
But he that feels the heaviest load,
Will prize forgiveness most.

No reckoning can we rightly keep,
For who the sum can know?
Some souls are fifty talents deep,
And some five hundred owe.

But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have naught to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all."

After this Vara frequently read the Bible to him. He always was glad to listen to *her* reading, and talked with her about what she read, almost confidentially; far more so than with Mr. Hamilton, who called frequently. Mr. Granger seemed always happy to receive the visits of his pastor, listened to his remarks with attentive interest, and to his prayers with apparent devotion, but never would admit his pastor to an intimate knowledge of his views and feelings, and answered his questions vaguely, except so far as to express, in emphatic language, his belief in the Bible as God's word, and his reception of "evangelical truth" as the right exposition of that Bible.

He grew weaker day by day. Kate was unremitting in her attentions, and, subdued by her father's alarming sickness, grew nearly as gentle in her manners as Vara herself. Notwithstanding the waywardness of her temper, she had always been her father's favourite; she resembled him more and understood him better, than any of his children. His conduct towards her now was peculiar and variable. Sometimes he would shrink from her when she approached him; once, after he had been watching her movements about the room for some time, he suddenly averted his head, and Vara saw him vainly striving to wipe the tears from his eyes; then again, he would throw his arm passionately round her neck, draw her face down to his, and repeat over and over again the words, "poor girl," "poor girl," "poor girl!"

In accordance with Mr. Granger's request, all his children were to spend New Year's day with him. Besides Kate and Roderick, there were three others, daughters, married and residing in the city of New York. As he was too weak to permit long-continued excitement, it was arranged that they should come the day before and leave the day after New Year's day. In view of their arrival, Vara proposed returning home, but Kate implored her not even to mention such a thing, for her father's sake.

It was Mr. Granger's habit to rise about ten o'clock in the morning, and sit up for an hour or two, during which time Kate and Vara, and sometimes Roderick, bore him

company. On the morning of the last day of the year, all came at the usual time. Mr. Granger was more than usually serious. Kissing Vara and throwing his arm round Roderick, he pressed them both to his bosom for some minutes; then, locking their hands together, he said to them, half playfully, "My dear children, this sick room is no place for you; go and enjoy yourselves this pleasant morning in some more befitting manner. Would that I could thus send you forth, hand in hand, to take together the journey of life! But go now, as I have bid you, for Kate and I have much to say to each other this morning."

Long was the interview between Kate and her father. When Vara and Roderick returned to the room, both were struck with the change in Mr. Granger's appearance. He looked paler; his eye shone with an unwonted lustre; the outlines of the face were more clearly defined; but the great change was the expression of his countenance. It was not the habitual gloomy, desponding look; neither was it joyful or rapturous, but something between the two—a sweet melancholy, a peaceful, composed and tranquil happiness smiling in every feature. His eye rested on Kate with a loving, tender, admiring gaze: and she sat beside him, holding his hand and looking into his face, with a countenance in which love and pity seemed to struggle.

"Here, Roderick," said his father, without moving his eye from Kate's face, "learn to love and honour this sister; she is worthy of your devoted regard; she might, by one unkind word—by one reproachful look—and, oh! how have I deserved her contempt and hatred! She might have made my last hours unutterably miserable; but she has made them almost happy. I commit her Roderick, to your special care."

Roderick, startled by these incoherent sentences, more than once would have interrupted his father to ask an explanation; but Kate beckoned him so beseechingly to be silent, that he refrained; and Mr. Granger being exhausted, desired to lie down, and asked to be left alone.

That afternoon the expected guests arrived. There were so many children to occupy Vara's time, and there were so

many others to visit the room of the invalid, that she purposely absented herself from Mr. Granger's presence. She was already on her way to bed, and stood hesitating, whether to pass by, or just look in upon him, when the door opened and Kate called her in, saying, her father had just asked for her to bid her good-night.

"Vara, dear lambkin," said the sick man, "repeat to me some of those pleasant Scriptures about heaven."

Vara's musical voice in that silent, dimly-lighted chamber, sounded like the whispering of an angel of that better land.

"Do you love to think of heaven, child of mine?" asked Mr. Granger.

"Oh, yes, yes, she answered fervently.

"But do you not dread death?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," in her natural tone, "very much indeed. It seems to me as if going to heaven were something like going back to my island-home. It would be very hard to part with all the dear friends I have here, and to know that I never should see them again. And then I would fear the sea-sickness and the danger of encountering a terrible storm. But I would be cheered by the hope of seeing my own dear father and mother, and the farther the vessel went, the more I would think of them, and the less of those whom I left behind; and when, at last, the sun shone on that beautiful home, and the rainbow played in the spray on the reef, and the fragrance of bright flowers came wafted on the sea-breeze, and the distant mountains glistened in the sun's rays like a coronet of glory,—oh! then, then, would I never so much as think of the dreary voyage, or of the pains of parting here, but would long for the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest. Oh, sir, it must be hard to suffer the pains of death—very, oh, very, very hard, to part with dear friends! But when we get so near to heaven, that its glory shines down into our souls, oh, sir, what a happiness that must be!"

"Vara, that blessedness is mine! But, child, tell this to none, except Kate, and teach her the way to those pearly gates, the way by the blood-stained cross, Vara." "My child," he added, after a moment's pause, "when I am gone,

you will hear others speak ill of me—hush, do not interrupt me. I have given them cause. Even *you*, dear one, shall need to practise forgiveness towards me; yet to your pure heart I may say what it were better that the carping world should not hear, that I have found forgiveness of God, and He has sealed my pardon with the earnest of His Spirit, witnessing with my heart that I am a child of God: my soul is full of deep, peaceful confidence in His promises. I can sing, if not with ecstasy and rapture, yet with calm assurance, ‘O grave, where is thy victory!—O death, where is thy sting!’ But repeat this to none—to none but Kate; and now God bless thee this night, and fulfil all the promises of His covenant in your behalf. Come to see me early in the morning, lambkin. Good-night.”

The sun was just rising on the New Year morning. Vara was dreaming that some one called her. She was sitting under the shelving rock, looking at the coral flowers. She thought it was Rutea’s voice that called her, and lifting up her eyes, she saw the rainbow dancing on the reef. She heard the voice again, and this time it was the voice of angels calling from the rainbow that—

“Midway station given,
For happy spirits to alight
Betwixt the earth and heaven.”

But no, it was a human voice; it was Cousin Granger’s; Vara stood up to listen and awoke.

“Vara, Vara,” said Kate, who now stood close beside her, “come quickly, father wants you. Oh, Vara, father is going!” and bursting into tears, she flew from the room. Vara followed as quickly as her trembling steps could carry her.

All the family were assembled. Mr. Hamilton was there too. The sick man had lain, apparently in a stupor, breathing with difficulty through most of the night. He had just rallied enough to recognize those about him, and at once asked for Vara. When the little girl entered, he beckoned her close to his side; she laid her hand on his cold fingers; he clasped it gently. Mr. Hamilton repeated the words of

the apostle, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," "of whom," responded the dying man, with distinct and solemn emphasis, "I am chief." All knelt, and Mr. Hamilton led in prayer. He prayed as men pray only in such an hour. "And now, Lord," were his concluding words, "let this Thy servant receive, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, the full remission of sins, and may the light of thy reconciled countenance shine upon his departing spirit, as the pledge of Thy promise in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."

"Vara, my child," said Mr. Granger, with slow and difficult utterance, as they all stood in silence around the bed, "that favourite fancy of yours about the rainbow occurs now to my memory. I cannot help thinking of it. It gives me comfort. Methinks I see the rainbow on the spray of the waves that roll in from the ocean of eternity."

Silence ensued again, broken only by the hard breathings. Minutes passed unmarked by the watchers. The difficulty of respiration became greater and greater. Windows were opened, fans were waved, tears fell, but no word was uttered. At last there was a moment in which the dying man seemed to revive and breathe naturally, it was only a minute, a second. He opened his eyes. "Farewell, my children," he said, "love one another,—and forgive—"

The voice ceased, and the spirit was gone.

"But o'er the scene a holy calm reposed,
The gate of Heaven had opened there and closed.

Vara began her New Year's day letter to her parents with these words: "My rainbow this day spans the dark stream of death; it beautifies present affliction and forewarns me, both of future trials and future consolations."

XI.

Disclosures and Confessions.

"Fill the seats of justice
With good men, not so absolute in goodness
As to forget what human frailty is."

"Wound with his life, through all his feelings wrought,
Death and eternity possessed his thought;
Remorse impelled him, unremitting care
Harassed his path and stung him to despair;
Still was the secret of his griefs unknown,
Amid the universe he sighed alone."

MR. GRANGER was supposed to be a man of great wealth. What then was the astonishment of the world, when it was ascertained that his real estate was heavily mortgaged, his personal property small, and all did not suffice to satisfy the claims of creditors.

Kate was the only one who manifested no surprise and no regret. Yet Kate was the only one who really suffered. The creditors lost little. The other daughters had been well provided for, at their marriages, by their father, and their husbands were in good circumstances. Roderick inherited, as the only son, an independent property from a bachelor uncle. Kate alone had nothing.

The noisy bell of the auctioneer was ringing through the streets of Liberty. Kate and Vara, with tearful eyes, and hearts full of unuttered sorrowings, stood upon the steps of the Granger mansion. A coarse red flannel flag hung heavily down from the balcony over their heads. The family carriage drove up before the door. Kate and Vara, without an audibly spoken word, embraced and parted, Vara to her home, Kate to seek a new home in the house of her sister, in the city of New York.

The horses and carriage returned to the front of the

mansion, and in less than fifteen minutes after their former mistress had relinquished actual possession, they were knocked off, under the hammer, to the highest bidder—the first scene in the drama, which, before nightfall, had stripped the Granger mansion of all its contents, even to the pictures on the walls, and the flowers in the green-house. Some of these, both pictures and flowers, Mrs. Stephens, with a delicacy and refinement of feeling that even Vara had not given her credit for, secured as mementos for the poor child of pleasant hours faded for ever.

That morning Kate had put into Vara's hand a letter addressed to Vara's own mother, saying, as she did so, "This letter, Vara, *he* gave me, and bade me, before I left this place, give it to you. He told me to read it, and he wished *you* to read it also, and then send it to your mother."

With that letter, Vara, after her return home, on the morning that she received it, retired to her own room, opened it, and read as follows:

"LIBERTY, —, 18—.

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—This letter—which you will never see till the writer is beyond the reach of your censure or reproach—will disclose to you what I ought perhaps to have the courage to confess now, but I have not strength, in my present feeble health, to support the consequences of an exposure from which I have so long shrunk.

"*You* know that I loved your father with more than fraternal affection. When he committed to me the care of his daughter and his fortune, I resolved to prove myself worthy of his confidence. When you arrived at your majority, and continued me in the charge of your fortune, you did no more than was due to the integrity and zeal with which I had protected and advanced your interests, devoting, as I did, often at a personal sacrifice, all my business talents and energy to your advantage.

"In an evil hour for me, you married a missionary. I vehemently protested against the match. Irritated at your persistence, I construed your acting against my wishes as a

want of personal respect and affection for myself. Your interests, of course, no longer lay so near my heart as they had done. I regarded your fortune as of comparatively little use to yourself or the world—an appendage to a missionary's outfit both absurd and cumbersome. What good would it do you among savages? At the best you would only squander it on Utopian schemes of usefulness. So I reasoned. Just at that time I needed money. You know the extravagance of my poor wife. She was a mere butterfly, harmless, indeed, and lovely in her way, but as destitute of thought as a child. I could not impress upon her mind the necessity of retrenchment, nor make her comprehend the first ideas of economy. She did not know how to live without spending money; she could almost as soon have existed without breathing air. Money I must have for her sake as well as my own. I wanted a large sum to relieve me from a heavy pressure. I borrowed it from your estates, and having grown reckless to your interests, I passed to your credit securities which I knew were not reliable, and which proved to be utterly worthless. I meant, I assure you, to return you the full amount. But the relief afforded me was only temporary. Shortly afterwards I learned, from secret information, that a large amount of stock, which I possessed in a certain company, would prove a dead loss. Already there were such suspicions abroad as depreciated the value of that particular stock in the market. To sell, at existing prices, in my embarrassed position, would be ruinous. I transferred it all to your account, and appropriated to myself an equal number of shares of good stocks from your property. I still meant to make it all good, and never doubted that I should have the ability. But, alas! I had gone too far to recede. Reverses multiplied. I became desperate. I freely used the powers of attorney you had given me, to mortgage your real estates. The money thus secured relieved me from embarrassment, but left me without the means of carrying on the large and extensive business in which I had been engaged.

"This did not happen in a few weeks or months. Four years had elapsed since I first resorted to your funds. During that time my wife had died, and my two oldest

daughters were married. I resolved to retire from business while I could with some degree of honour. I did so, and purchased the place where I now reside in the town of Liberty.

"In retreating from the city to the country, I had three objects in view. The first was to endeavour, by economy and management, to save something out of the wreck of my property for you. The second was, to prevent the loss of what little property my wife left, and which I felt belonged sacredly to her daughters. The third was, to save my younger children from forming habits of extravagance and dissipation, by a fashionable life in the metropolis.

"As regards the first two objects, I have been wholly unsuccessful. Every year I have gone behind hand, more and more. I have long expected to arrive at that point at which concealment would be no longer possible. Indeed, I never could have covered up my pecuniary difficulties, if the world had not been preposterously credulous of the exaggerated reports of my riches. The last unencumbered property left by my wife was mortgaged almost to its full value at the time of Matilda's marriage, that I might present to her an amount equal to that which I gave to each of her sisters when they were married. The rest of my property will barely pay my debts. My beloved Kate, for whom I would have sacrificed everything, the dearest to me of all my children, is to inherit only poverty, dependence, and a father's dishonoured name. A profound melancholy has seized my soul. I long to die. The sooner I go, the better for my reputation, for the less will be my liabilities. If I were alone, perhaps, I would proclaim the truth and suffer the consequences.

"But how could I plunge Kate into such misery! No; she can endure dependence without me better than with me. I tremble daily lest discovery and exposure should occur. Oh, that I might die! and yet I fear death, for I am a sincere believer in the Christian religion, and that religion, leaves me no cloak in which to cover my guilt before God.

"You will no longer wonder that I ceased all correspondence with you, my dear, noble cousin. I could not

bear to play the hypocrite, and I had not courage to tell you the truth. Your magnanimity in refraining from all complaint, or even inquiry as to the way in which your fortune was lost, overwhelmed me. I wished to forget you. I pretended to carry my offence at your marrying a missionary so far, as on that account to refuse to speak of you to others, or to write to yourself.

“You may judge how startled I was by the announcement in the newspapers of the arrival in this country of ‘a daughter of the Rev. Mr. Austen, missionary in the Pacific Islands.’ And when I was informed that the child was in this town, breathing the same air with myself, a sword pierced to my inmost soul. That a child of yours, a grand-child of my dearest relative and friend, should be eating the bread of dependence in the very town in which I was living in actual luxury and apparent affluence—this was a possibility I could not bear! I flattered myself with the supposition that there might be another missionary of the name of Austen, and that this child was not yours. My not receiving a letter from you seemed to confirm this view of the case, though I a little suspected that wounded pride might have induced your silence. But I was not long permitted to remain in doubt. The next Sunday in church, when the congregation rose to pray, I turned, as my custom is, my back to the pulpit. This movement brought me face to face with a little girl sitting directly behind me. The moment my eyes rested upon her face, they were rivetted there. I could not look away. I forgot all else. It was *your* face. It was you as I remembered you when you were a child. If you had died and re-appeared to me as a ghost, to reproach and haunt me, I could not have been more terrified. An expression of anxiety on the face of the little girl first called me to my senses. It was a sweet look of tender love and solicitude she gave me, so like yourself. It dissolved the spell. I sat down and wept, as if I were a child myself; my whole frame was agitated, and, if the long prayer had not afforded me a pretext for keeping my head down, I must have attracted the attention of the congregation.

“I did not dare venture to church again; I even feared

to leave my own grounds, lest I should meet you again in the person of your daughter. At length your letter arrived. I had resolved, in case you should write, to refuse all acquaintance with your child, on the score of your offensive marriage. But the veiled threat in the closing paragraph of your letter, induced me to alter my purpose. I knew that you could prove nothing against me so far as your own property was concerned, but I also knew that a legal investigation into my management of your affairs would lead to the discovery of the unsound condition of my own. I sent my daughter to call upon your child. I invited her here.

"I intended to meet her with cold, distant, and indifferent politeness, and to prevent the hope or desire, on her part, of becoming a frequent or intimate visitor in my family. She came. I saw her first beaming with childish love and enthusiasm, at the discovery of your portrait in my library. Almost the first words she spoke to me were of your unchangeable affection for me; and, almost with her first breath, she asked if *she* might love me. Resistance was out of the question. I could not shut my heart against her. I have loved her from that moment, and better acquaintance has deepened and strengthened that love. Her beauty, simplicity, artlessness, grace, sense, genius, charm me. But it is her piety, her deep, unaffected, childlike, fervent piety, that constitutes her chiefest attraction. I have a presentiment that she is appointed to be an evangel to me,—that, in the infinite mercy of God, the event which I had regarded as a special act of Divine retribution,—the presence of that child, to haunt and mock me, in the very place of all the world where I had sought to secret myself from society,—will prove one of those gentle chastenings which purify the heart, and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby.

"Knowing that I love the child, as you do know from letters which I have already written to you, you will often wonder why I do not receive the blessed little innocent to my home, as well as to my heart, and adopt her for my own. But when you have read this letter, you will wonder no more. What could I give her, but poverty and disgrace!

No : I cannot be so selfish. The good people with whom she lives, can hardly sympathize with the excessive sensibility of her nature and refinement of her tastes. She must suffer trials and struggles known only to God and herself. But they are upright, kind, and indulgent—in very good circumstances, and they intend, as I have heard again and again, to divide their ample property equally between our lovely Vara and their own son.

“Dear cousin, I do not *ask* you to forgive me, I *know* that you will; nor will you ever cease to love and pity him who, when you read this, will be in eternity.

“Assure Mr. Austen, that however unjustifiable my resentment at your marrying a missionary, I have never entertained other than sentiments of the highest respect for himself personally. I love him for your sake and for Vara’s sake, and admire him for his own.

“My dear Mary, unhappy penitent that I am, I am, as I have ever been,

“Your most affectionate cousin,

“CHARLES GRANGER.”

Many and bitter were the tears which Vara shed over this letter. To her unsophisticated mind, the actual guilt seemed much less than it was. The veil of intentional honesty, which Mr. Granger had thrown over his errors, disguised the real turpitude of his conduct. But the keen self-reproach which he had suffered, she fully comprehended. Nay, interpreting the feelings, of the man of the world, by her own pure and ardent sentiments of love and honour, she gave Mr. Granger credit for more anguish of mind than he had ever experienced. “Would that I had known it all,” she said. “How much gentler and kinder I might have been. Only to think how unhappy he was with a sick heart, when I thought only of his sick body. But he saw the rainbow at last, and, I trust, the waters of his regeneration are now radiant with its beauty in the kingdom of Heaven.”

XII.

Suits and Non-suits.

“ Thus in plain terms :—Your father hath consented
That you shall be my wife ; your dowry ’greed on ;
And will you, nill you, I will marry you.”

It is Christmas once more. Five years have passed away since the death of Mr. Granger. Mr. Boyle and Adele were travelling in Europe, the former suffering from impaired health. They have been absent some eighteen months. Vara sometimes received long letters from them. Kate Granger keeps up an affectionate correspondence, but they have not seen each other since they bid farewell on the porch of the old mansion. Mr. Stephens, by the rise in value of real-estate in Liberty, has advanced from a condition of handsome competence, to that of abundant wealth. He is not profuse with his money, nor has he very enlarged views of things ; yet his charities are large, and his domestic expenditures, being regulated wholly by Mrs. Stephens, are on a liberal scale. That lady regards Vara with an extraordinary devotion. She does not always understand the child. The loftier aspirations and deeper sensibilities of Vara’s nature, are beyond the reach of her plain-thinking, right-minded, practical, and energetic mother. But Mrs. Stephens denies her no indulgence, and is never wearied in consulting her tastes. Vara loves her only with less affection than her love to her own mother. And Vara is happy—perfectly happy, save for some wistful longings after her dear island-home. She has, indeed, no such friends now as the Grangers and the Boyles. But she has many kind acquaintances, who would be intimate if she desired it ; she has her school, her books, her drawing, and her music ; she has Mr. Hamilton’s most acceptable ministrations in the church, the Sunday-school, in which she has been advanced to the posi-

tion of a teacher, and the weekly Bible class; and, above all, she has a grand object in life in view,—an engrossing thought—an animating, elevating, noble aim,—to prepare herself to be a worthy and efficient assistant in the evangelization of the poor inhabitants of her native isle. Rutea's bracelet still clasps her arm, and she often kisses it, and remembers the promise she gave to the wild pagan maid. The little sketch-book, too, is still treasured; when she gazes on its familiar pages, it seems but a day, or an hour, since she looked on the original; many of her own drawings are enlarged views of the same localities; and her own father, to whom she has sent some of them, as specimens of her skill, has been surprised at the accuracy with which her memory has supplied the details which his own brief sketches would not admit.

Among other sources of Vara's happiness, the change in Daniel's conduct towards her must not be omitted. Since the removal of the Grangers, and the absence of the Boyles, the ugly symptoms of pique and jealousy, which had once distressed her, had wholly disappeared. Lately, indeed, he had been really kind and considerate towards her. Not that he ever had been positively unkind: he had only been selfishly careless and indifferent, but now he seemed suddenly to have awakened to the consciousness that she had some peculiar claims on his thoughts and affections. He was really brotherly. If she wished an escort, or if she had an errand to be done, he was always at her service—so prompt to offer and so quick to perform, that it was a pleasure to accept his attentions. This change in Daniel was so marked, and withal so sudden, that she could not but observe it. She began to think she had done him injustice, that he had indeed inherited something of his mother's nature, which she had heretofore strangely overlooked. She was grateful for his kindnesses, and she fancied that she loved him as a sister loves a brother; she knew not how deep and unconquerable is the aversion of a pure, loving heart, to a cold, selfish, contracted spirit, whatever may be the tie of connection that links them in the constrained intimacies of life.

Once or twice, Daniel's efforts at agreeability had been rather startling. On the Sunday preceding this Christmas-

day, when she came down from her room prepared for church, Daniel met her at the foot of the stairs, and, with a highly theatrical air, presented her with a bouquet of greenhouse flowers. The idea of carrying so conspicuous and extravagant a bouquet to church, as he evidently expected her to, seemed to her ludicrously whimsical, and, on the plea of saving their delicate beauty from exposure to the cold, frosty air, she hastened to deposit them in a glass of water on the parlour table. By this delay they were so much belated as to render it necessary to walk very fast to church. In her haste she once slipped, and nearly fell on the frosted pavement, and Daniel neither laughed nor scolded, as he once would have done, but insisted on her taking his arm, to prevent the recurrence of a similar casualty. "How kind, how queer, how uncomfortable!" thought Vara to herself, as she took the proffered arm of the awkward youth.

Her satisfaction in the services of God's house that day was sadly disturbed by Daniel's pertinacious politeness. He picked up her gloves, he assisted her in throwing off her furs; he found the hymns in her book; he seized her Bible, before sermon, and would not relinquish it till he could hand it to her with his stubby, rough finger end, indicating the words of the text. Vara felt that she ought to be grateful that he was very brotherly, yet, somehow, she wished he were less so. When he laid his heavy hand upon hers, she tried to bear its weight fondly, but for some reason she could not, and after enduring it for half a minute, some irresistible impulse compelled her to snatch her hand away. The conflict between a sense of gratitude and an instinct of aversion towards Daniel, perplexed her and led her to institute a searching analysis into the character of her affection for her brother, the result of which was a partial discovery of the truth, that hers was not exactly what sisterly love ought to be; nay, that if Daniel Stephens were not the son of her mother, she should positively detest him. At this discovery,—which would never, perhaps, have been made, if Daniel had persevered in treating her with rude neglect,—Vara was shocked and grieved. Much she blamed the wickedness of her heart. Firmly she resolved to try to love him as a sister should. It

was this resolution that made her studiously gentle, kind, and even affectionate in her manners towards him. She watched for opportunities to do and say pleasant things. If Daniel's vanity and stupidity had been capable of a suspicion of the real state of the case, her assiduous efforts to anticipate and gratify his wishes would have removed his doubts.

On Monday morning, the day before Christmas, Mr. and Mrs. Stephens left home to spend that holiday in the city of New York. From the time that they left, Daniel became a wearisome annoyance to Vara. He would loiter in the parlour, when she wished him at the store; he would read to her the accounts of tragical murders and distressing suicides, with all their revolting details, as related in the newspapers; or entertain her with witless jokes of witless clerks on witless customers in his father's store. So long as he staid in the house, she did not like to leave him alone, though often longing to retire to her own pleasant room. If she took up a book to read, she was soon obliged to lay it down again, to listen to his tedious and vapid stories. If she attempted to sew he was sure to pull her workbox to pieces, or take his seat so close to her as to interfere with her elbow-room. If she had recourse to the piano, he begged her to play and sing some negro melody or foolish song, which she had learned only to please him, and had sung till completely nauseated with its vulgarity. Once, when absorbed in the performance of a grand symphony by Handel, her fervent soul kindled with the enthusiasm caught from the genius of the piece, her thoughts wandering to that shore where the ocean rolled in its harmonious bass, and the winds sung in unison, and sky, earth, air, and sea, mingled in one image of beauty, and where, as she fancied, she could distinguish the voices of her own father and mother, blending with those of happy converts, in notes of "wonder, love, and praise,"—when the ties of her present life seemed all dissolved, and the dreamy past returned as a vivid present; then, like the crash of the harshest discord in the softest part of a perfect harmony, the voice of Daniel, who, flinging down a volume of Maryatt's novels, begged her "to stop that *strumming*, and play something lively," dissipated in an instant the fond

illusions of her imagination, and brought her back to the stale common-places of her everyday life. The transition was too sudden. The sensitive girl hastened from the room with such precipitancy, that Daniel did not discover the woe-begone expression of her countenance. He soothed his vexation at her apparent rudeness by the supposition that she had suddenly recollected some household duty, and soon after he went whistling out of the house to attend to his own neglected duties in the store.

Christmas morning Vara found a package suspended from the knob of her door. On opening it, it proved to be a Souvenir in the gaudiest style of those *recherché* volumes. On an ornamented page, encircled with extravagantly coloured wreaths of flowers and shameless cherubs, was the inscription :

Vara Austen,

FROM

DANIEL STEPHENS.

Her first feeling was that of amusement at the utter tastelessness and uselessness of the gift. Her next, of regret that she herself had been so remiss as to provide no Christmas keep-sake for him. Indeed, from the time she had discovered, six years before, that Daniel had sold the idol and weapons sent to him by her own father,—the proceeds of which sale had purchased an elaborated pin, a vulgar combination of little chains and big dull garnets, which still disfigured his neat shirt bosoms,—she had never felt disposed to make him another present. This was the first he had ever vouchsafed to her ; and she now resolved to be prepared to reciprocate it against the approaching New Year's day.

That day, Christmas, to Vara's great satisfaction, Daniel, who was second lieutenant in the Liberty Guards, was fully occupied from an early hour in the morning, with a military parade. She had the day for her own meditations and employments. If Daniel had hoped that the splendour of his uniform, as he bade her farewell, made him irresistibly

captivating, or that his handsome souvenir would keep him in fond remembrance throughout the day, he would have been somewhat chagrined to know that from the time when he left the house in the morning, till he made his appearance at the tea-table in the evening, she had been wholly oblivious to the fact of his existence. For this lapse of memory, however, she was obliged to make ample compensation, by thinking of no one else but Daniel, for the next twenty-four hours.

Daniel, after tea, instead of taking his hat and leaving the house, put on his slippers, his snuff-coloured slippers, worked in worsteds, by the eldest Miss Harris, each slipper being adorned with one red tomato, one purple plum, and three blue forget-me-nots, which last, evidently, were a sentimental addition to the original pattern. These slippers were a sure prognostication of an evening at home.

Vara checked a rising sigh, and resolved to lay herself out to entertain him. A few lumps of soft coal on the anthracite fire in the grate, placed there by her own hand, soon filled the room with a cheerful blaze. She let down the red damask curtains over the windows, which reflected the warm bright light with a genial glow. In a few minutes she had trimmed, filled, and lighted the largest astral lamp, ordinarily reserved for gala occasions, and placed it on the centre table, where Daniel's bouquet still displayed its brilliant colours. The sofa was most invitingly wheeled round to the fire; the sewing-chair was placed next to it; the work-box produced and placed at the most remote distance from Daniel's long arms that convenience would allow; and Vara seated herself to sew and to talk. If she had imagined nothing more delectable than a long evening's tête-à-tête with Daniel, she could not have taken more pains to prepare for it.

That young man had silently watched these operations with a smirk of satisfaction on his countenance. Once, when she disappeared from the room for a few minutes, in the process of her arrangements, he gave audible expression to his sentiments in a sort of ejaculatory soliloquy.

"Fine girl that! what a nice thing it must be for a

man to have a wife to get his slippers of night, and make the room look bright and cheery—I will, I am sure I will—” and the mental promise was sealed with a snap of his fingers, by way of an exclamation point. Then, falling into a soberer train of reflection, he resorted to the elegant habit of pulling his fingers and cracking his knuckles..

“How comes it, Daniel, that you spend Christmas evening at home?” asked Vara, by way of opening the conversation.

“For the sake of spending it with you, Vara. Tom Harris wished me to go with him and hear the Ethiopian melodists, but I thought *you* might be lonely.”

“I am much obliged to you ; but I thought you had an invitation to a party this evening ?”

“So I had ; but I be blamed, Vara, if I care to go anywhere without *you*.” The pronoun was so mysteriously emphasized, that Vara involuntarily looked up, but his inexpressive face helped her to no solution.

There was silence for a minute or so, during which Daniel shifted about uneasily in his seat. At length he exclaimed with sudden energy, “Vara, I am sure I could be happy anywhere with *you* !”

“Why, Daniel, could you?” she replied with unaffected surprise. “Why, I never supposed that you loved me so much.”

The entire simplicity and frankness of this confession, acted as a damper on his vehemence, and he only replied, “I do, though.”

Vara thought she was delighted with this unexpected avowal of her brother’s love ; yet, when he extended his big hand, and caressingly played with a curl, that almost touched the sofa, on which he sat, as she bent over her work, she felt unaccountably uncomfortable, and suddenly found it necessary to draw nearer to the light on the centre table.

Vara was threading her needle, a little at a loss what to say, being inwardly conscious of no such love as could make her happy ‘anywhere’ with the solitary companionship of her brother. But Daniel relieved her by breaking away from the subject altogether.

"Vara, what do you think that Tom Harris said to me to-day?"

"Well, what did he say?" asked Vara, returning to her seat by the sofa.

"Why, he said he'd make love to you, if he dared!"

"Did he?" said Vara, with her quietest smile.

"Yes, he did. But, seems to me, you take it mighty easy. I thought girls always blushed when such things were said to them."

"Why should I blush, Daniel? I see nothing to be ashamed of in Mr. Harris' entertaining a flattering opinion of me."

"Now, tell me truly, Vara," said Daniel, with unusual seriousness, "did you know that Tom had a *particular* regard for you?"

"They say, Daniel," and the same quiet smile played upon her dimpled face, "a woman may sometimes imagine that a man likes her, when he does not, but never fails to know it, when he does."

"Well, I declare, Vara, you talk as if you knew all about such things, and were twenty years old at least."

"Mine has been a thoughtful life, Daniel," she answered sadly, "and I believe I am older in my views and feelings than most girls of my age."

"And you think sometimes about love and marriage and such things?"

"Most girls do, I believe, and I must plead guilty!" and the quiet smile came back.

If Daniel had been competent to appreciate the exceeding beauty of his cousin, he might have taken for granted, that by this time, the flatteries of those who are ready to fall in love with every pretty face, however distasteful, must have compelled her to think of 'love and marriage and such things,' as Daniel expressed it, whether she would or not. But Daniel did not know that his sister was remarkably beautiful. Her's was a standard of beauty far above his admiration. He would have called her 'a pretty, delicate little thing,' but nothing in comparison with the blooming, rosy-cheeked Miss Harris.

"Do you love Tom Harris?" asked Daniel with emphasis.

"Love is a strong word in such a connexion," Vara responded.

"Well, would you *have* him, if he asked you?"

"He does not 'dare' to ask me, according to your account, and therefore I need not decide the question."

Daniel looked vexed. Vara laughed outright, to see him so puzzled as to the state of her affections towards Mr. Harris.

"Now, Vara, please answer me out and out, for I have a very particular interest in the matter." Vara began to think that Mr. Harris meant to do his courting by proxy. "Do you think that you care enough for Tom, that you like him well enough, ever to become his wife?"

"No, Daniel, if you really wish to know. I cannot conceive it possible that I could ever entertain any other sentiments towards Mr. Harris, than those of mere liking for a clever, wild, heedless scape-grace, that he is."

"I am glad of that," ejaculated her brother, falling back on the sofa, as one that had gained a point and relaxed his exertions.

"Are you? I thought he was your best friend!"

"So he is; but I don't want him to marry *you*."

"Marry *me*! Why, Daniel, what possesses you to-night! I am a mere child; you certainly cannot talk seriously about my being married. There will be plenty of time to think of that. And Mr. Harris, who must be twenty-four or five years of age, may have two or three wives before I am old enough to be married."

"You are seventeen, and many girls are married at seventeen, and so may you be."

"I hope not."

There was silence for a few minutes. Vara's thoughts were busily occupied in dreams of the future, not, as might be supposed, of orange flowers and bridal favours, but of life in a beautiful island, where she might be permitted to consecrate her abilities, whatever they were, to the service of God in behalf of her heathen countrymen. Her pleasant reveries were suddenly broken in upon by the voice of Daniel.

"I begin to think of getting married myself."

"I supposed you had *begun* to think of it a good while since."

To this remark Mr. Daniel paid no attention, but went on in a very business-like style, detailing his prospects in life,—and Vara heard more of money that night than ever before in all her days.

"When I gave up going to college," he began, "father, you know, took me into the store as a clerk. He promised me that so soon as I became of age, he would take me into partnership;—and, as he had enough already, you know, he should, if I proved worthy, relinquish the whole business to me. Now the store, you know, brings in a clear income of fifteen hundred dollars. On that, you know—"

"Daniel, please do not say 'you know' so often. I do not know anything about it." She had a great mind to say, that she did not wish to know.

"Well, whether you know it or not, the store brings in fifteen hundred dollars a-year, and on that I could support a wife very comfortably. Then a young man with my prospects is no mean-catch for any girl. I think now that I could marry almost any girl I pleased. I have been looking a little into the old man's affairs—"

"Into whose affairs?" interposed Vara.

"Into the old man's, that's father, you know; and I reckon he's worth now a hundred thousand dollars in real estate alone, and his property is increasing in value all the time; and he owns a power of stocks and mortgages, and other trash. I tell you what, though, my wife shall dress in silks and satins, and ride in her carriage. I hope, some time or other, to buy old Granger's house, or else build one handsomer than that, and furnish it handsomer too. My wife 'shall live in peace and die in a pot of grease,' as Aunt Polly's stories use to end," and Daniel laughed in the excess of delight at the picture of felicity which his refined imagination had painted. Then assuming a more tender tone he added, "wouldn't you like to live in old Granger's house, Vara? You always seemed to have a fancy for it."

But Vara did not like the association of the dear old place with Daniel; and longing to change a topic, in

which the mean, selfish, and calculating spirit of this hopeful son, was only too conspicuous, she threw down her work, and rose to go to the piano, saying playfully, as she did so,

"Well, Daniel, I wish you would get married, that I might be bride's-maid. Sarah Harris has so many sisters, I suppose I cannot stand first though!"

"Sarah Harris, indeed!" exclaimed Daniel, "do you think I would marry *her*!"

Vara was half way to the piano, but, at this exclamation, stopped and turned towards Daniel, with a countenance full of surprise, pain and incredulity. For a moment she could not speak. She advanced slowly, laid her hand upon his arm, and, looking up into his flushed face, asked with an imploring look and wistful tone—

"Daniel, are you not engaged to Sarah?"

"Engaged? No!"

"Then what means that ring upon your finger? Is it not her's?"

"Daniel blushed and looked confused. He tried to pull off the offensive trinket, but his bony knuckle would not let it pass. It was with a feeble attempt at a smile that he answered, "Oh! that ring was only a childish joke, we exchanged rings some two years ago. She is older now, and must know that I would never think of marrying her. Why, she's as poor as poverty; and if I married her, I should have to support the whole family. Sarah Harris is no fool. She knows better than to think of me."

"Daniel," said Vara, "for more than two years you have been a devoted admirer of Sarah. You have given her presents. You have received presents from her. You have permitted your mother and me to suppose that she was to be your future wife. If there has been no formal engagement, I cannot help believing that she regards the contract as binding. She is worthy of you. She strangely" (the word slipped out) "loves you; loves you with her whole heart; and if you now cast away that love, I fear you will break her heart. Oh, dear Daniel, do not trifle with her. Take a sister's advice and marry Sarah Harris."

Vara sat down overcome by the ardour of her own feelings. Never before had she talked so earnestly to Daniel.

Never had she suspected that she felt more than a passing interest in the supposed engagement between him and Sarah Harris. Sarah was a good, cheerful, amiable, affectionate and common-place person, not calculated to awaken an extraordinary regard in a character so elevated as was Vara's.

Daniel looked perplexed, ashamed, and angry. Vara expected a coarse outbreak of passion. But he evidently struggled to subdue his vexation. When he spoke, it was with such calmness, that she was startled, and with such a mock heroic air, that she was, in spite of herself, amused.

"*Dear Vara,*" he began, taking advantage of the unusual epithet she had attached to his name, "*dear Vara, would you have me marry Sarah, if I love another better? Would you have me sacrifice myself to a foolish whim, when my heart is bound in the silken fetters of love to one more worthy of it. I like Sarah. I like her well enough. I have nothing to say against her. She is a good, fine girl. If I knew none better, I might marry her. But I know one lovelier, better, and—*" he was going to say, '*richer,*' but he checked the word and left the sentence unfinished.

"And pray, who is this fond object of your idolatry?" asked Vara, with a slight tone of irony, for she doubted if his heart had anything to do in the matter. "Among all your lady acquaintances, I cannot recall one who is '*more worthy*' of you than this '*good, fine*' girl, Miss Sarah Harris!"

"Oh, Vara, you said a woman never fails to know when a man loves her. Can it be that she whom I love so fondly, so—tenderly, so—desperately, has never read my heart? Has she not smiled upon me, accepted my attentions, consulted my tastes, anticipated my wishes—"

Daniel had been once at the theatre, and was now exerting all his powers of mimicry to act the lover. But before he got fairly warmed up in the effort, Vara impatiently interrupted him with the exclamation.

"Please, Daniel, have you ever asked her if she loved you? and if so, who is it? I cannot imagine: is it Lucy Hayes? Mary Shaw? Letty—"

"Vara," interrupted Daniel, "if I do not love Sarah Harris, it is *your* fault."

"*My fault?* How can that be? I have never said a word against her; I have never sought to weaken your attachment—"

"Vara, are you so blind? or are you only pretending to misunderstand me? Vara," and he made a solemn pause, "I love *you*!"

"So you told me once before this evening. But what has that to do with this matter?"

"Pshaw, Vara, why are you so stupid! Well, if it will out, it must. I love you better than anybody else; and I want you for my wife: and I make you now a free offer of my heart, my hand, and my fortune."

O what a pretty, puzzled face was Vara's then; just a little tinge of red mounted from her cheeks to her temples, at the mere thought of what she was sure Daniel could not mean.

"Surely you are jesting, Daniel?"

"Never more serious in my life. If I was signing a bond for fifty thousand dollars, I could not be more in earnest. I love you, dear Vara. Will you love me?"

"Daniel," she said, dreamily, "do you forget that I am your sister?"

"Sister! You know that you are no more my sister than if we had never met. Oh, Vara, I love you fondly, dearly, devotedly, desperately. Will you be mine?"

It took so long for Vara to believe that he was in earnest, and so long to comprehend his real meaning, she had sat motionless, and suffered him to take her hand. But as she began to understand the case, and when the last disagreeable sentence was accompanied by a most disagreeable squeeze of her little white hand, her gathering indignation burst out in a torrent of contemptuous invective. She flung his hand from her; she sprang to her feet; her blue eyes grew black, and shot out flashes of scorn.

"Marry *you*!—love *you*!—be *yours*!—mean, selfish, calculating, sordid boy! No, never! I despise you! If you have *dared* to cherish a serious thought of—of—what you have now proposed, banish it from your mind as utterly hopeless, and never, never presume, sir, to insult me again with a similar proposal!"

Daniel quailed at first under the power of her eye. But he had not sense enough to comprehend the nature of the insult he had offered to her woman's heart. He saw and felt only that he was scorned. This irritated him; and he answered, in a tone as fierce as her own,—

"I should like to know what right *you* have to use such language to *me*. You have been fed, clothed and educated, with money that of right belongs to me. My father took you from poverty, and made you rich, and that at my expense. And now you turn upon me as if I were a toad or an adder. Is it for *you*, or such as you, to treat *me* with contempt?—as if you were a princess, and I a beggar! You had better remember, Miss! that you are the beggar; and that *I* have made you such an offer as you may never have again—such an offer as any girl in this town would jump at!"

Long before he had finished, Vara regretted the harshness with which she had spoken. She remembered that he was the son of those who had been indeed father and mother to her. She recollected too a hint, once dropped by Mr. Stephens, which at the time she only half understood, but which now flashed upon her as an intimation of a wish that she and Daniel might be united. She recalled too a hundred words and acts which had passed between Daniel and herself during the last few weeks, which he might have interpreted as encouragements to his suit. It was strange that she had never suspected his intentions before. It was not so strange, when she reflected upon it, that he should regard her as aware of his intentions! Yet, with all this, came the conviction, that his motives were only mercenary and worthy of disdain.

The heightened colour forsook her cheeks, and left them deadly pale; the lightning faded from her eye; the lid drooped over its beauty; and, clasping her hands on her bosom, to quiet the beating heart, she strove to speak calmly.

"Daniel, I have spoken hastily, unwisely, unkindly. I am sorry, I ask your pardon. If it is possible, forget it. Let us love one another as brother and sister still. I never can be more to you. My indebtedness to your father and mother I well know. I am not accountable for it, for I was too young when they adopted me to have any choice in the

matter. I am not aware, however, that I have taken anything from *you*. If your parents had not adopted me, they would, probably, have adopted some other. At any rate the money was theirs, not yours. They had a right to spend it as they pleased. If you wish to possess yourself of what your father intends to leave me, you may take it all—you are welcome to it. I will never touch it—do not interrupt me. As for marriage, I have consecrated myself to the work in which my own parents are engaged. So soon as my education is sufficiently advanced, and my age will allow, I shall join them in their distant island-home. And now, Daniel, as you do not expect to be a missionary yourself, you must know that I can never, never marry *you*. Good-night; and please—please forget all that has been said on this subject, except that I can never marry any one but a missionary.”

Before he could stop her she had left the room to himself and his own agreeable meditations. The calmness and even kindness with which she had spoken, had restored him to his equanimity. He even thought that he discovered in these, signs of relenting.

“By Dido!” he exclaimed, “how mad she was, and how handsome she looked! Even Sarah Harris never looked so beautiful. Poor Sarah! I hope she won’t take it hard. Can’t help it. Look out for number one. And as for you, miss minx,” shaking his fist at the door through which Vara had vanished, “I’ll have you yet! Faint heart ne’er won fair lady. I have the best chance. I’ve spoken first. First come first served. ‘Missionary’ indeed! I’ll be a missionary first myself!” And so saying, this very sensative young man stretched himself out at full length on the sofa, and gave himself up to such delightful reflections as the conversation of the evening was likely to suggest.

As for Vara, she saw no rainbow that night. All was clouds and darkness round her spirit. It was long after she retired to her room, before she could make the necessary preparations for the night. For a full hour she cried and laughed by turns, as she recalled the vexatious or ludicrous features of the denouement of that evening’s *tete-à-tete* with the unsuspected lover.

XIII.

Passing under the Rod.

"Make her a slave ; steal from her rosy cheek
 By needless jealousies ; let the last star
 Leave her a watcher by your couch of pain
 Wrong her by petulance, suspicion, all
 That makes her cup a bitterness—yet give
 One evidence of love, and earth has not
 An emblem of devotedness like hers.
 But oh ! estrange her once—it boots not how—
 By wrong or silence—anything that tells
 A change has come upon your tenderness,—
 And there is not a feeling out of Heaven
 Her pride o'ermastereth not."

"The shells of fledge souls left behinde,
 Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort."

WHEN Vara appeared at the breakfast table on the next morning, Daniel's cool composure put her at her ease. The fear that the words she had uttered in a moment of excitement might rankle in his heart, was needless. Daniel was not over-sensitive. Vara, too, was relieved of the difficult task of trying to love him. Now that she understood the motives which induced his tender interest in herself, she felt under no obligation to reciprocate it. She quietly laughed at his ill attempts to render himself agreeable, and despised him for them more and more.

But her head ached and her heart was full of dismal forebodings of what she might expect from one who had not delicacy enough to desist from his annoying attentions, nor sense enough to take a repulse. She hastened through her household duties, resolved to try the bracing effects of a walk in the cold air of the bright December morning.

Daniel did not loiter as usual in the parlour. He had

business on hand, which he resolved to accomplish without delay. His hands in his pockets and whistling with decision, either to keep up his courage or to let people know that he cared not a fig for their opinion, he crossed the street and went directly to the house of Mr. Harris.

It was four weeks since he had crossed that threshold. In spite of his affected nonchalance, there was a sense of shame and guilt in his heart, when he wished Sarah Harris "a merry Christmas." A gleam of unmistakeable happiness flushed her face at his first appearance and salutation. But when he seated himself at the opposite side of the table, without coming round to give her some more affectionate token of his good wishes, the flush rapidly subsided, and gave place to an air of dejection. She was thinner and paler than she used to be. Daniel began to think that she was not so much prettier than Vara after all; perhaps not even as pretty. Possibly this reflection assisted him in coming directly to the point.

"Sarah," he began, taking at the same time her ring out of his vest pocket, "here is a trinket of yours that is of more use to you than me."

He stretched his hand over the table. She neither spoke nor raised her eyes. She could not. Daniel laid the ring on the table between them. He was doubtful whether she had heard him. He began to feel uncomfortable. He tried to make conversation upon ordinary subjects. But Sarah spoke not. She only darned away at the stocking, faster and faster flew the needle, in and out, up and down, now this side, now that side, faster and faster. Oh! the struggle in that woman's heart!

"Sarah," said Daniel at length, "you are not offended with my giving you back that ring?"

No answer: only the darning-needle flies faster than ever. Perhaps she needs more light, for she turns on her chair, a little more towards the window, and a little farther away from Daniel. 'Well,' thought he, 'if I've got to do all the talking myself, I had better do it at once, and make an end of it.'

"Sarah, I didn't mean to tell you *why* I gave you back

your ring, for fear it might hurt your feelings. But since you seem to be angry with me, I suppose I must."

The darning-needle moved more slowly. Sarah turned back to her former position. She evidently was listening—listening intently, perhaps catching at a straw, hoping to hear of some lover's whim or jealousy, that a word might banish for ever. Daniel, however, did not tell. He has never been so embarrassed. He continued silent.

Sarah looked up into his face. She saw there what her love interpreted most favourably for him and herself, as an expression of grief and suffering. Her needle ceased now altogether, and in a sweet, plaintive, imploring voice, she said :

"Well, Daniel, what is it ? Have I offended you ? Have I said anything I ought not to have said ? Has any one been making an evil report of me ? Tell me what it is ; and, if it is my fault, I promise to amend it. O, Daniel, you ought to have told me long ago. You ought not to have waited so many weeks, and then come, and, in this cold way, give me back my ring so, without saying a single word. You have made us both unhappy, and, perhaps, without cause. I am sure I can explain it, whatever it is. Come now," she concluded, in her cheerfullest voice, for she had talked away her fears and doubts, "come, out with it ; let us kiss and make up, as the children say."

That honest, loving face beaming upon him, shook Daniel's purpose. He had some heart, if it was a selfish heart, and that heart, such as it was, belonged to Sarah. But just then three or four of the younger children bounced into the room. Their very clothes, though neat, betokened the severe economy that was practised in the family. Daniel's selfish genius whispered, "These you will have to provide for ; —better take the rich wife and no dependents, than marry poverty and a household !" and before Sarah could hustle the little ones out of the room, his despicable determination was fixed.

"Sarah," he began, as soon as the room was cleared, "the fact is," and he tried to throw a shade of surprise into his voice, "the fact is, that folks say that we are engaged."

He paused. Sarah, not exactly liking the tone of his voice, had resumed her darning.

"Well, Daniel," she said, when she found that he was not disposed to enlighten her any further as to what "folks said;" "well, Daniel, what if they do?"

"Only, Sarah, I thought you mightn't like it."

"I might not like it, Daniel?"

"Yes. You know it might prejudice your prospects. You are poor, and ought to be married; and you are a great favourite, you know, with all the young fellows. But if folks say that I am engaged to you, why then, none of them would make up to you."

Sarah evidently did not comprehend these very refined insinuations; or, if she did, she did not believe her ears; for, with the most mystified expression on her honest face, she threw down her work, and coming close up to Daniel, exclaimed,

"Do, Daniel, explain yourself. What am I to understand? Do you love me, as you have always said you did? and do you wish me to love you, as I have always done? or—not?"

Daniel was a little non-plussed, and hesitated how to answer.

"Why—yes—certainly—Sarah—I entertain the same feelings towards you that I have always done, and I hope that you will always entertain the same towards me. But now—you see—the fact is just this, you see—two years ago, when we were both almost children, we were dreadfully in love with each other; but now that we are grown up, you know, we ought to put away childish things, as the Bible says. Now, Sarah, I'm old enough to be married; and I suppose I ought to get married; but of course, you know, for you're a sensible girl, Sarah, I must marry to advance my prospects in life. A young man like me, you know, can marry the richest girl in town, if he pleases; and it wouldn't be reasonable to expect him to marry a poor girl. Now, Sarah, of course you couldn't expect me to marry you. And if anything I've said, or done, has led you to form any such expectations, I am really sorry, Sarah; and that's one reason why I don't wish to keep your ring, for fear you might put a wrong construction on it. And another reason is, that I don't wish to seem to stand in your way, if you should

be likely to marry somebody else. And another reason is—Sarah—that,—that, I am *almost*—yes, I don't know but I may as well say it—I'm almost as good as engaged to another, and *she*, you know, might not like me to be wearing another girl's ring."

Woman's pride, the strength of her weakness, dictated the answer of that insulted, injured girl. Drawing his own ring deliberately from her finger, she tossed it into his hat; as deliberately she took her own ring from the table and threw it into the fire;—pale with emotion she was,—but neither eye, voice, nor gesture betrayed her breaking heart, as she proudly replied:

"If, sir, I have had reason to indulge any expectations, in which you were concerned, I entirely and voluntarily renounce them; and restore to you, sir, your perfect liberty to give your miserable heart and hand to whom you please."

She quietly gathered up her work, and, with the dignity which never forsakes true womanhood, walked out of the room.

She had gone. And with her has gone, Daniel, all that could ever have made you a good, a happy, or a useful man. You have thrown away what money can never buy; a true, pure, and loving heart. You have cast off the only talismanic influence that might have drawn you within the charmed circle of social love, peace, and felicity. You have lost the good genius, which had power to temper and subdue that selfishness of disposition, which shall now have full sway in your heart, and shall fill you with all manner of meanness, avarice, penuriousness, cruelty, and brutality, shall make you despised, loathsome, and hateful to the world, and shall leave you without the companionship of one good thought or hallowed feeling.

How Daniel slunk away, like the catiff that he was, from that house! how he vainly strove to rally his spirits, by acting the part of salesman in the store; and how at last he succeeded by strolling off to pass an hour or two with "the romping Trover girls," as they were called—it is hardly worth our while to pause and tell.

Neither shall we tell, in all the details, how poor Sarah wept and fainted on her mother's bosom—how her heart

lost its youthfulness, and her cheek that first bloom of beauty that never returns—how she maintained a cheerful aspect, and jealously concealed her broken heart from inspection—how piously she performed her fatiguing duties as the eldest daughter, in that large and straitened family—how she married, a few years afterward, a country clergyman, and brought up a family of her own in the fear of God—and how, at last, with a sigh over the weary world, and a beam of hope towards a better country, she committed her spirit to the Saviour, and fell asleep in Jesus.

When Vara had despatched the business of housekeeper, she started for her walk. The first breath of the clear morning air revived her spirits. The cheery nod of Aunt Polly Williams, at her basement window, sent another ray of sunshine to her heart.

“La! me,” exclaimed Tim Brown’s wife, who had run in to gossip with Aunt Polly, “there goes that missionary’s darter. Seems as how them missionaries get well paid for their services. My son Bill says as how they live in luxury and make sarvants of the poor heatheners. And then, seems as how folks are fools, they send their children to Ameriky, to be educated and be made ladies and gentlemen of, and to inherit the money that honest folks made with the sweat of their brow. I don’t give none of my cash to them missionaries, no how. My Bill’s told me too much!”

“Now you, Sally Brown, needn’t a be setting there a talking in that style. If you knew what a sweet critter that child is, you’d think as how it weren’t very easy for her parents,—and they’ve got tender hearts, for I’ve hearn their letters,—to be a sending her miles and miles and oceans away, to live with strangers. They wouldn’t do it, nor they could help it. They put out the light of their eyes and the joy of their hearts, when they parted with her. You grumble mightily about Bill’s being away at sea, and you have seven more of ’em to hum. How would you feel if Bill was your only dear childer, and he should tare off to sea, and leave you alone? How then must the parents of such as *her* feel, I’d like to know!”

"Deary me!—Mrs. Williams, if they take on so, why don't they come arter her, and leave the heatheners be! If they want to do good, there's a plenty to hum, that would be grateful for their sarvices; and the money it takes to send them such orful long voyages would put bread into many a poor body's mouth."

"Hey diddle, diddle! Sally Brown. You jist tell the old story over agin. I oncet used to think arter the same fashion; but I knows different now. I knows that money sent to missioners don't cost poor folks nothin; but all, in the good providence of God, some how or 'nother, works round for their good. I've made my obs'vations, and I've come to the conclusion, that them what gives most to the missioners, gives most to the poor folks to hum. Somehow, when I give to send the Gospel abroad over the world, it seems to stir up all kinds of Gospel love in my heart, and I can't rest till I do something kind like for the poor suffering critters around me. I don't believe that I ever gave a silver sixpence to the missioners, that it didn't cost me one shillin, at least, for the poor, starvin', sufferin critters to hum. Marcy sakes, don't I know!"

"Well, well, Mrs. Williams, I only wish somebody would take a notion to play the fool, like them Stephensens, for my darter, and give her a Christian edication, and a fortin, too, if they pleased. You hear my Bill tell about the missioners once, and you'll learn a thing or two. Good mornin, Mrs. Williams."

"Spiteful thing!" muttered Mrs. Williams, when her gossip had gone, "come here only to show her new hat; she couldn't have bought it if she had done her duty to the poor, leaving alone what she ougter do for the missioners."

In the meantime Vara walked briskly on through the crowded streets, nor slackened her pace till she reached that part of the town which was adorned with the more country-like residences of taste and opulence. She paused before the shut-up house of Mr. Boyle. She examined every door and window, as if each could tell her something of the friends who were far away. She tried the gate; it was locked. The garden, grown over with weeds, and strewed with leaves, looked "all a-dreary."

She passed on to the Granger mansion. It was the anniversary of her first visit there, and she longed to see it again this bright morning. The Trovers resided there now—a rich family, who had recently come from—no one knew where. She did not like them, and would never have visited them but to please Daniel, who did like them. She ventured to enter by a side gate into the garden, and there, keeping herself concealed from the house by the shrubbery, she retraced many a winding walk, and recalled many a scene now gone for ever, it seemed to her ages since. Her reveries were suddenly disturbed by approaching footsteps. There was a little nook at hand—she remembered it well—an accidental arbour, formed by a cluster of evergreens. She stepped over the flower-bed, found the opening, and hid herself. She had barely time before the intruders came in sight. She recognised the voice of one, long before they were visible. It was Daniel's. He was talking to the eldest Miss Trover, talking nonsense, and—could it be? Yes; he was talking love. They paused before a large bunch of Chrysanthimums, which had thus far outlived the mild winter, much longer than was necessary to admire its beauty or cull its most perfect flowers. Vara was thus forced to be an unwilling listener to the rhodomontade. She was astonished at the flippancy with which Daniel protested an affection he did not feel, and equally so at the mixture of pleasure and nonchalance with which his extravagant compliments were received.

"Oh fie! Mr. Stephens," exclaimed Miss Trover at last, "do you suppose I am ignorant of your infatuation for Miss Harris?"

"I protest, Miss Trover, that's the unkindest cut of all. Ha, ha, ha! Why, Sally Harris darns her brothers' and sisters' stockings. Sentimental! don't you think so? Poor thing. I wish some respectable mechanic would take pity on her poverty. But, please, Miss Trover, don't doom me to the penalty of supporting her and her family."

Laughing together, they walked on; and Vara disliked Miss Trover, and despised Daniel, more than ever.

As soon as they were out of the way she hastened to leave

the garden. She had prolonged her walk beyond her purpose. This last detention had been unfortunate. She looked at her watch: it was already past the hour for the arrival of the cars from New York, and she was expecting Mr. and Mrs. Stephens to return in them. She quickened her pace.

When Vara came within sight of the house, she saw that a carriage stood before it, and a crowd of people about the door. Some were going in, some coming out. Neighbours were running to and fro. She ran too. They made way for her on the steps. One or two tried to speak. "Please, Miss Austen, don't be alarmed—" "Miss Vara, it's only an accident—" But she did not stop to listen. The open parlour doors assured her they were vacant. She heard footsteps over head. She was up stairs before her presence in the house was known. And there, on the bed, blood-stained and unconscious, lay her mother. Aunt Polly was there, and the doctors were there. A glance told her that they were trying to remove the clothes. Without a question or a word, her bonnet and cloak were noiselessly deposited in her own room, and motioning the rest aside, with gentle dexterity she removed the clothes and exposed the wounds and bruises of that dear mother. The doctors didt heir work. Vara was their efficient assistant. Their work finished, they shook their heads, ordered that the room be kept quiet, and that if symptoms of fever occurred, they should be sent for. Vara took her seat by the bed; and there, for thirty-six hours, she watched beside the unconscious sufferer.

Once or twice only were there symptoms of returning consciousness. Once she opened her eyes and gazed upon Vara, at first with wildness, and then with apparent recognition. The look grew intensely affectionate, and then faded away into a dull, dreamy stare, and she was again insensible to sight or sound. Again, the second night, she partially opened her eyes, murmured the names, "Vara," "Anna," "Jesus," and fell into a profound sleep, from which she never awakened. In the depths of that night the last pulse beat, the last breath was breathed, and the noble-hearted mother was no more.

" Oh ! blessed are the dead in Christ !
Why will we mourn for them ?
No more the stormy billows here
With weary hearts they stem.
But harboured in eternal rest,
By far-off islands of the blest,
Calm on a sunlit ocean's breast,
Anchor their fearless bark.

" Seem they to sleep ? 'tis but as sleeps
The seed within the earth,
To burst forth to the brilliant morn
Of a more glorious birth ;—
Seem they to feel no breath of love
That o'er their icy brow will move
With tearful whispers warm !
'Tis that upon their spirits' ear,
All heaven's triumphant music clear
Is bursting, where there comes not near
One tone of sorrow's storm."

XIV.

Heavy Burdens.

"They are the patient sorrows that touch nearest!"

"Poets have wrong'd poore storms: such dayes are best;
They purge the aire without, within the breast."

By the casualty on the railroad, which ended so fatally in the case of Mrs. Stephens, Mr. Stephens received some slight injuries. He was already able to sit up when his wife died; and, though the shock of her death somewhat retarded his recovery, in the course of a few days he was once more pursuing the usual routine of his monotonous life. He was a sincere mourner, but his grief could not sink very deeply into a heart that had no depths in it.

Vara mourned alone; yet not alone, for Aunt Polly and Mr. Hamilton, and all who could appreciate Christian excellence, mourned with her; and, in that distant island-home, tears fell fast over her letters and tear-blotted pages, full of sympathy, told of the grief of her own dear father and mother.

But Vara had little time now to nurse her grief. Indulgent as Mrs. Stephens had been to Vara, she had never been so to herself. She had never relaxed her vigilance in household matters, but had continued in competence, of choice, the habits which had been formed in early life by necessity. Two servants did the hard work. But all cakes and preserves, and all the fine ironing, the mending of clothes, and the putting of them away when they came from the wash, and even the making of shirts and under-garments, were the work of her own hands. All this now came upon Vara.

At first Vara enjoyed the feeling that she was at last of some practical use in the world. But when week after week rolled round, and she found herself perpetually on the treadmill of household drudgery—no time for music, or for reading—hardly time to keep up her correspondence with her own dear parents, and with Kate Granger and Adele Boyle—she longed for a release from her burdens.

Nothing had been said, since her mother's death, about her returning to school. She herself had felt at first no disposition to do so, when she saw how necessary were her services at home. But now she became solicitous for the result. She was losing the most precious season of life, and what she did not learn, she might hardly hope to acquire afterwards. She tried, by rising early to redeem time for study; but her progress, without helps, and without teachers, was slow and unsatisfactory. Once, and once only, some three or four months after her mother's death, she ventured to suggest the subject to Mr. Stephens.

"Father," she said, "I am very anxious to perfect myself in several of my studies; and, if you can possibly spare me, I should like to go to school again, if you please, sir."

"Go to school! Why, you are seventeen; and you've surely been at school long enough to learn everything worth learning. Why, I expect you'll be married soon. I know some one," glancing over at Daniel, "who would like to have you; and whom," speaking more deliberately and seriously, "I should like you to have, Vara."

He could have taken no method to silence her more effectual. The subject was never mentioned again. Mr. Stephens' hints about Daniel, however were often repeated; and that gentlemanly and heroic young man was not backward in following them up with the most annoying attentions. He never could understand that there was an impassable barrier between them. One source of pain—that of repulsing not only, but of despising the son of her dear mother—Vara was spared. Certain letters of Mrs. Stephens', which fell into Vara's possession, revealed the fact that Daniel was no son of hers!

Induced by poverty and dependence to marry Mr. Stephens when he was a young widower, she had bestowed

upon his infant child, at that time some eighteen months old, the ardent affection of a heart which the husband himself could not fill. She had insisted that Daniel should never be informed that he was not her own son. Early left an orphan, thrown upon the cold charities of distant relatives, she had never before had any one to love ; and now, in the very luxury of loving, she lavished her affections on Daniel. Bitterly was she disappointed in never receiving back from his contracted heart the love she so much craved. Her indulgence served only to foster the selfishness of a coarse and vulgar nature. Do what she would, she could not refine him. Dull in mind, gawky in form, and base in spirit, her gentle and elevated character failed to impress itself upon him. The birth of a daughter allayed the severity of this disappointment. For four years she lived for that child. Then came death, and left her desolate. She had been an idolater, and the Lord is a jealous God.

If she lived nearer to God, after this affliction, and tasted of his consolations, yet her human heart craved some earthly object of affection, and her vigorous, energetic temperament needed employment. At a missionary meeting one evening, a returned missionary made an address, the purport of which was, the power of individual effort. He showed how much one person can accomplish when he devotes himself to one object. "And now," said he, "which one of you will be the working-hand, in behalf of foreign missions, in this church and village !" He spoke eloquently. The quick enthusiasm of Mrs. Stephens was enkindled. Silently, but resolutely, she pledged herself to the work.

From this time she threw off the incubus of sorrow which had paralysed her soul. The very relief she found from depressing grief, in this new occupation of her thoughts and feelings, induced her to pursue it more ardently. She was instant in season and out of season. She distributed missionary papers. She got together a missionary sewing circle. She begged money for missions from almost every one she met. No visitor carried out of her house all the change he brought into it. She stinted her own family, that she might save money for the missionaries. She was, in fact, as Aunt Polly Williams said, "jist nothin but a walkin

mission'ry box, and you might hear the money for missions a jingling wherever she went." At length the notice in one of the papers, of the anxiety of a missionary in reference to his child, met her eye. She persuaded her husband to take that child. And she found, not merely a new missionary protégée, but, what she had not sought, or thought of—a real daughter in Vara.

From the night when her heart first opened to Vara, her affections and feelings returned to their natural and healthy channels; and the wild and almost desperate energy with which she had engaged in the missionary cause, subsided. She had another object in life. Her eyes, too, were soon opened to some egregious blunders, into which she had fallen, in reference to the nature of the missionary work. Her conversations with Vara and Mr. Hamilton, and the letters of Mr. and Mrs. Austen, corrected those errors. She pondered what she read in missionary papers, and laid up many things in her heart, like the blessed Mary, which the casual reader would have overlooked. Vara read aloud, while she listened sewing in hand, many memoirs, histories and travels, which bore on missionary subjects. Together they read, and talked, and prayed. Their views expanded. Their hearts became more intelligently interested in the great work.

Mrs. Stephens no longer supposed that the missionary must live like the natives to whom he preached the Gospel, or that he ought to deprive himself of the comforts of life, however he might be destitute of many luxuries and desirable superfluities. She no longer thought that missionaries were necessarily saints, "exempt from the ordinary infirmities and peccability of men." Nay, she saw that however it might require, at the outset, some extraordinary vigor of piety to become a missionary, yet that the "outward helps in the cultivation of piety and a holy life, are by no means so many on missionary ground as at home." She no longer regarded individual cases of remarkable conversions or of missionary hardships, as the most interesting items in the missionary reports, nor did she look for such results as followed apostolical preaching. She saw that it was not the immediate result alone, or chiefly, for which the missionary must labour. He was not, burning with enthusiasm, to exhaust his ener-

gies and spend all his strength upon his first efforts. It was a great work. He must lay a broad foundation. He must build slowly and surely. Yea, he must pull much down, before he could begin to build, and however he might hope for present attestations of God's blessing in isolated cases of conversion, after all he must judge of results by the gradual progress after years of labour.

Mrs. Stephens loved the cause of missions even more than when she had been its more active and notorious, though self-appointed agent; nor were her efforts to advance its interests less efficient, than when her expedients had been more injudicious. But she loved Vara too. Their love grew and strengthened. The good cause helped to cement it. They confided their hopes, wishes, and plans in reference to it, to each other; and Mrs. Stephens knew and approved of Vara's intentions to consecrate herself personally to the work, though she never could bear to hear or speak of a project which might eventually place an ocean between them. Often had she said to Vara, if she might choose, she would desire to die first, before that time of earthly separation should come. Her wish, alas for Vara! was gratified.

The discovery that Daniel was not the son of that dear mother, relieved Vara's heart of its heaviest burden. She felt now at liberty, as she had never felt before, to cease the useless effort to love him as a sister. "Never, never let me fail," was her prayer, "to do my duty to him, and to treat him with that kindness which is due to my adopted father and to the memory of my dear mother, who bore with his faults and ever dealt with him as a son." With this determination she dismissed Daniel, as much as possible, from her thoughts and feelings.

Vara had one source of vexation, trifling it may seem to others, but to herself a real trouble;—the difficulty of getting money. Her mother had always kept her well supplied. Her father she had never been accustomed to approach with familiarity. She knew not how to ask him for it, and he never thought to volunteer it; and when she ventured, his cold repulse disheartened her. He could not understand what *she* needed money for. If she needed dresses, all she had to do was to go to the store and make.

her selection, and *that* was her only expense. The house-keeping too, do what she would, was far less rigid in its economy than in her mother's day; and when bill after bill came in, Mr. Stephens often manifested unmistakeable tokens of displeasure. Not only was he oblivious to her private purse, but he never seemed to think that the house-keeper's purse, at least, must be replenished. Many were the expedients to which she resorted, to prevent the necessity of a personal application. Washerwomen and hucksters were sent to the store to collect their little dues of Mr. Stephens himself, and the servants besieged him at the door, when he went out from his meals, with a "please, sir, Miss Vara forgot to ask you for some money." Money procured for her own use, was often spent upon the house, and she would be ashamed to ask for its reimbursement. Many a nice book, or new piece of music, to which she would once have treated herself, was now dispensed with. Even the missionary box, at monthly concerts, received only a penny, or at best a sixpence, from her hand. The poor had to take such cold victuals as the larder afforded. And hardest of all, the little hoard which she had been so long accumulating in the savings' bank, unbeknown to any one, in the hope that it might some day be large enough to defray the expense of a visit of her own father and mother to their native country, perhaps to carry their daughter back with them, received no additions.

Thus the year wore on, with few pleasures, with many heart-aches and back-aches, tired nights and gloomy mornings; uncared for by her father, and annoyed by Daniel.

Little did Tom Harris suspect the scandalous conduct of Daniel to his sister. Neither sister nor mother would have willingly divulged the humiliating secret. Tom was a heedless fellow, too harum-skarum and fly-away to observe what was going on under his very eyes; and, at this particular time, so full of his own love-affair, as to have no thought or care for any one else's. He failed to notice the entire suspension of Daniel's visits to the family. Day after day he met Daniel somewhere, and heard about Vara; and night

after night he called at Mr. Stephens', ostensibly to see Daniel, but really to see Vara; and he was happy.

Daniel had pretended to be Tom's friend, and to be exerting all the potent influence of his brotherly affection to awaken in Vara's heart an interest in Tom. But his duplicity came to an end by his own act. His jealous eyes soon discovered that Tom was preferred to himself. He did not discover that the real difference was, that Tom was treated with ordinary respect and courtesy, while he was regarded with ill-disguised contempt and hearty aversion. He only saw that there was a preference, and that that preference was for Tom. He tried many expedients to break off his intimacy with Tom, at least to keep Tom from the house. But Tom was most adhesive and pertinacious. He had ears and eyes only for Vara. He saw or comprehended none of Daniel's hints. At length Daniel resolved to terminate his hopes for ever. Calling at the store, in which Tom was a clerk, one morning, he took Tom aside.

"Tom, I wish to tell you something in confidence."

"About Vara, Dan? O quick—what is it?" asked the impetuous young man.

"Yes, Tom, about Vara and about *myself*. I have been afraid for some time past, notwithstanding my efforts to discourage you, that you were indulging flattering hopes in reference to that young lady; and I think, as your friend, I ought to let you into the secret. You see, Tom—but you promise not to tell?"

"I promise!" said Tom, in anxious haste, but with a most lugubrious tone of voice.

"Well, Tom, Vara is engaged to me."

"*Vara* engaged? *Vara engaged?* *Vara engaged to you?*" he repeated with a new emphasis each time.

"Now, Dan, this is a cruel jest!"

"I am in earnest, Tom."

"I don't believe you!"

"On my word of honour, I declare it; I positively assure you it is so."

Amazement, grief, contempt and burning rage succeeded rapidly in the distracted mind of Tom Harris; and when he spoke, it was in a voice trembling with these contending passions.

"Pray, sir, how is this to be explained consistently with your relations to my sister?"

Coolly and insolently, as he turned upon his heel and left the store, Daniel replied, "If explanations are needed, you had better ask them of your sister!"

Unfortunate reply. Daniel had hardly left the store, before Tom Harris was hastening, quick as passion could carry him, to that sister, to learn the scorn with which she had been treated. His rage passed all bounds; he was a maniac: two hours afterwards, bleeding, bruised, and battered almost to the loss of life, Daniel was carried to his father's house to be nursed and cared for by the reluctant Vara; and Tom Harris had fled from the town, believing himself to be a murderer, and, before his course could be arrested, had sailed for Texas. Thus another sorrow was brought to Sarah's heart, and ever did she mourn the loss of that noble brother, whose impetuosity of temper had hurried him on, and for her sake alone, as she always supposed, to a wild and dissolute life in a new and lawless land.

XV.

Matches and Marriages.

"If there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are married, and have more occasion to know one another."

"Gold! gold! gold! gold!
 Good or bad a thousandfold!
 How widely its agencies vary—
 To save—to ruin—to curse—to bless—
 As even its minted coins express,
 Now stamped with the image of Good Queen Bess,
 And now of a Bloody Mary."

"Was ever match clapp'd up so suddenly?"

It was Christmas again.

Vara had hurried through her household duties, and was sitting in her own room. It was the first time a fire had been kindled there that winter—a comfort she denied herself, both to lessen the work of the servants, and to save some little expense. This morning she had resolved to treat herself to the luxury, and was now seated before its bright flames, to enjoy, after her own fashion, a "merry Christmas."

She had sat but a few minutes, when the head of the Irish girl obtruded itself into the room, with a "please, Miss Vara, your father is after wanting you." "What can he want," thought Vara. But sundry symptoms lately had made Vara wary of something that might happen, and she felt an unusual trepidation in answering the summons. Her father had been very particular of late about the 'doing-up' of his shirts and collars. He had been guilty of certain extravagances in his wardrobe. He had had the black band on his last new hat wonderfully reduced

in size. He had two or three times staid out so late at night, that evening prayers were indefinitely postponed. He had purchased a match to his one horse, and a new and stylish waggon, but never asked Vara to ride in it, though more than once she had caught sight of a bonnet on the seat beside him. Once, when he was complaining of her want of economy, and she playfully said, "Father, please get a housekeeper," he had answered, with a manner that meant something, "I mean to." And Mrs. Tim Brown, when doing a day's washing at the house, had maliciously said something, loud enough for Vara to hear, about "the way that Trover girl would make the missionary's darter stand about."

If Vara felt some slight palpitation at the approaching interview, her father was in a state of most uncomfortable embarrassment. Before she had closed the door, he began an address that he had been laboriously concocting—but broke down in the very first sentence.

"Vara, my child, your dear departed mother having been removed from me in the providence of God, I—I—I have sent for you, Vara, to communicate to you,—I have sent for you, I say, to talk with you about—that is—to tell you that, that—in short, Vara, I am going to be married again."

"Well, father, provided you get a good wife, I dare say you will be more comfortable than I have managed to make you."

"Oh! as for that, I have no fault to find with you, but a wife, of course, can do better than a daughter."

Vara did not know that there was any "of course" about it, and was afraid, if her suspicions were correct, he would find so too. With some anxiety, therefore, she put the question: "Who is the lady, father?"

"Miss Trover, the eldest daughter of Mr. John Trover. She is somewhat young, to be sure," as he saw the pitiful expression with which Vara regarded him, "but then she is very sensible and discreet for her years, and able to take that position in society which my wife should assume."

"When are you to be married?" asked Vara, not knowing what else to say.

"In the middle of January some time."

The conversation seemed now to have come to its legitimate end, and Vara was about to go, but her father stopped her."

"Wait. I want to have some conversation with you in reference to yourself. Daniel tells me that he loves you very much. It would gratify me to see you united. It would be a pleasant thing to have our marriages take place at the same time. What do you say?"

It was the first time he had ever spoken openly and directly upon this hateful subject. He had satisfied himself with hints and inuendoes; taking for granted that the intimation of his wishes would ensure their fulfilment. Judge of his surprise, when Vara promptly and somewhat tartly replied:

"I say, sir, that I never can, never *will* marry Daniel."

Mr. Stephens looked aghast. He could only articulate between surprise and disappointment, "Why not?"

Because, sir, I do not love him, and because we have been brought up together as brother and sister, and because—oh, for many reasons."

Mr. Stephens, somewhat recovered from his first consternation, now proceeded to reason about the matter, as if arguments could kindle love, or conquer the heart's aversion.

"Vara," he said, "I wish you to think of this matter more seriously. There are reasons why it is very desirable for you to marry Daniel. If my dear wife had lived, I should have, as she desired, divided my fortune between you and Daniel. But now matters are altered. I am about to be married. Others will have a claim upon me. You cannot expect me to deal with you as with my own children." ("He took me of his own free will, for his own child," thought Vara.) "Indeed, I have already done more for you than I ought, in justice to those who are, or may be nearer to me." (Vara's heart burned with a sense of cruel injury.) "And I see no way in which I can provide for you so well as by your marrying Daniel. I shall give up the store to him; and, if you marry him, will settle something handsome on *him* besides. Then you know you will have a house of your own, and will be"—(he was

about to say, "out of our way," but he corrected himself and said) "it will be better all around."

"Father," and her soft earnest voice would have touched most hearts, "please never speak of my marrying Daniel again. I never—never can. I will not even think of it." Mr. Stephens fidgeted. He was evidently growing wrathful. Weak-minded people are always irritated by disappointment. But Vara continued in the same calm, firm voice: "what you wish is to get me out of your way. Let me suggest a plan by which this can be done. Send me to a boarding-school for a year. By that time I shall be qualified to teach, and, thenceforth, will take care of myself."

Mr. Stephens evidently was favourably struck with the idea. He continued thoughtful. "Well," said he at length, "I will think more of it. Perhaps it is the best plan. And I suppose it is right, since I have educated you, that you should now provide for yourself!" Oh, heartlessness! The day will come, sir, when you shall feel that you have outraged nature in casting off such a daughter as this!

From that hour Vara, in spite of herself, ceased to feel as a daughter, and felt only as a dependent, and longed for the time when that irksome dependence should cease. They had stretched out their hand over the ocean, and taken her from her own beautiful home, and her own grief-distracted parents. They had called her "daughter," educated her tenderly—promised her wealth. She had rewarded their care as a daughter should. She had been obedient, considerate, affectionate, giving no pain, no trouble—the light and the joy of their house. Her piety and prayers had brought blessings on them. Her grace, beauty, refinement, and loveliness, had elevated their social position, and had opened to them a circle of acquaintance, which, without her, they never could have entered. And, since her mother's death, she had filled, uncomplainingly, the onerous position of head of the family; toiling as an own daughter, in similar circumstances would not have toiled; dispensing with self-indulgences, which an own daughter would have demanded; and now, when she could no longer be of use, the father discovers she is no daughter; takes credit to himself for the charity he has bestowed upon

her; plainly intimates that she is an undesirable incumbrance on the family; thinks it very proper that she should earn her own living; and, in fact, turns her adrift in the world to look out for herself. Cruel injustice! Vara keenly felt it—felt it better than she could explain it, and learned then, what multitudes have learned in the heart-breaking experiences of the world, that there are some hearts into which the children of adoption can never find their way; some consciences that never can comprehend the simple justice of their claims. Years and years may the artificial relationship exist, and yet, in spite of promises and of appearances, the sentiment survives, ‘You are not bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; what I do for you I am under no obligation to do; what I do redounds to my credit; what you receive increases your debt.’ Happy are the children of adoption who escape actual wrong. Happy, indeed, where blessed with a love, which, if not all a parent’s might be, is yet true, steadfast, and faithful. If there are some like Vara’s adopted father, there are also many like Vara’s adopted mother.

Notwithstanding some painful emotions, some indignation, and some mortification at the treatment she had received, Vara felt a degree of pleasure at the turn which affairs had taken, that grew under her excitement of mind into an ecstasy of joy. Her Christmas letter to her parents reflected more of the prismatic colours than any she had indicated for a long, long time.

“My own, my dear, my *only* parents,” she began. “I am so happy, so merry, this Christmas morning, I cannot help singing out for joy as I write, and yet I fear telling you the occasion of all this felicity, lest it may seem to you a more fitting occasion for grief and solicitude. But I cannot regard it so. I am sure the covenant hand of God is leading me in ways of His own devising. The dark clouds that have hung around me for the last dreary twelvemonth, are breaking away, the rainbow begins to glimmer upon them, and will soon shine out as brightly as ever. Oh! what a year of horrors I have passed through. I may speak of it now, that it is past. Without a congenial heart to turn to, without respite or recreation, all has been toil—toil—toil; and yet not the

work, not the fatigue of body, not the drooping of the mind under the incessant drudgery of the hands, would I complain of, but the petty and undesigned, yet irritating and unintermitted persecution of contracted and gross minds. But all is over. I am to go to boarding-school for a whole year, and then—be not startled, dear parents—I am to be a teacher myself; yes, I am to be thrown on my own resources—I am to be dependent on no one! I am to have no parents on earth but your own dear selves! And now may I regard, as nearer at hand, the hour when I shall join you in your labours, and live once more in my dear island-home. Oh! how the gulf has narrowed between us: how is the sense of that terrible separation diminished: there are none now on earth between you and me. Pardon me, my dear father, that I keep you so long impatient. I will try to still the beatings of my heart, and write with composure. Nothing dreadful has happened; or, I hope—I am not quite sure—is to happen. Only Mr. Stephens is to be married. No, dear mother, she is *not* what you would approve for his wife! She is too young, too heartless, too frivolous. I fear it is his money and not himself. But he is to be married, and I am, therefore, become unnecessary in his household, and, in fact, an inconvenient incumbrance; and I have adopted the plan proposed of my own choice, though, I must confess, with the too ready acquiescence of my adopted father. But I am happy—*so* happy! And God grant that he may be spared all the trials my apprehensive fears suggest. May he be as happy with his wife as his daughter would have striven to have made him!”

From this day Vara was relieved of Daniel's disagreeable attentions. He fell back into his old habits of indifference and concern. No longer was she obliged to guard her thimble, and her handkerchief, and her gloves, and her spools of cotton,—why don't they make them square, to save awkward gentlemen and bashful maidens so frequent a chase, terminating with bumped heads and red faces!—no longer did she have to watch all her tools and appurtenances with an Ogre's eye, lest Daniel should win a hateful “thank you.” No longer did she slip out slyly by the basement door, to carry some dainty to Aunt Polly, or to some poor sick body,

—lest Daniel should insist upon being her servitor. She might drop, if she pleased, the whole contents of her work-basket, and wish aloud that some one would help her in her haste, and Daniel would never stir from his seat, even if he was no more engaged than in pulling his fingers. She might come in or go out, by front door, basement door, or parlour door, and Daniel was wholly oblivious to her existence, save when he had occasion for her services, or chose to grumble at her housekeeping.

Daniel did not take the announcement of his father's engagement so quietly as Vara. He stormed and raved; threatened to leave home, and intimated suicide. His father was "skeered," as aunt Polly Williams said. In Daniel's presence he looked like a whipt child, and skulked about the house as if he had no business there. Daniel had more than one reason for disliking the match. He had an eye on the young lady himself. Her father was reputed to be immensely wealthy. This was enough to win Daniel's affections, though she might be three or four years his senior, and was by no means handsome. He had always meant, if he failed in securing Vara, to marry Miss Trover. She, too, had played her game. She had coquetted with Daniel, and laid her snares for his father; resolved to have the former if she pleased, and the latter if she could. To have been foiled at his own game; to be duped and made a fool of; to lose the girl he liked, and at the same time, to lose the prospect of being his father's sole heir, was too much for his treacherous amiability.

But Daniel's ill-humour gave place to his spirit of discretion. He soon saw that he might lose by his anger more than he gained. The quiescent temper of his father betrayed unusual symptoms of some volcanic outburst. Daniel feared he might be taken at his word, and be dismissed from his father's house. In two days he was as placable as a lamb, and all subservience to his father's wishes. Seeing the matter could not be helped, he resolved to do the best he could for himself under the circumstances; and, on the very next New Year's day, just one week after his attentions to herself had so abruptly ceased, Vara was informed by Mr. Stephens, that the marriages of himself to the elder Miss

Trover, and of DANIEL TO MISS SUSAN Trover, her only sister, would be celebrated at the same time and place, on the sixteenth day of January, then next ensuing. Even so. So soon as Vara was discovered to be penniless, Daniel had turned from her piety, her beauty, and her genius, and given his hand and heart to a plain-looking, weak-minded, languishing and inefficient girl, whose only attraction was her presumptive expectations as heir to one half of her father's reputed fortune.

Vara had received many pressing invitations to visit her mother's relatives in the city of New York, and her father's in New England; and it was now agreed that she should accompany the bridal parties, on their wedding tour, as far as New York, and spend the ensuing three months in visiting these relatives, till the time arrived when she was to enter the boarding-school.

Mr. Stephens for once filled her purse handsomely.

"Vara," he said, one day, "that bombazine is shabby, and your silk dress, as I observed the other day, is torn. Get some new dresses. And here is some money if you need it."

Vara understood the hint, for she still wore black, and immediately took advantage of it to say, what she had resolved to say when opportunity offered.

"During the last year, father, I have outgrown all my old *coloured* dresses; indeed, my whole wardrobe needs replenishing. I am now old enough to mingle in society, and I am about to visit fashionable people, and I must appear as your daughter—as the daughter of a man of wealth;—and—and—in fact, father, I must have a good deal of money."

Mr. Stephens, only too glad to get her out of the way, and too excited in view of his marriage to indulge a penurious spirit, answered, "Well, well, child, you shall have it;" and a few hours afterwards crammed her purse with bank bills to an extent that astonished her.

The first fifteen days of January were days of bustle and confusion. There were carpenters, and painters, and masons,

and whitewashers, and scrubbers, and upholsterers, up stairs and down stairs; the whole house was revolutionised; new curtains, new carpets, new chairs, new lamps, new tables; old things crowded up into the garret, sent over to Aunt Polly Williams', or Mrs. Tim Brown's, or, wet with Vara's tears, carried away on rickety carts to the auction store.

The sixteenth of January rose bright and beautiful, and passed away without a cloud. The double wedding was a grand affair. The money it cost was beyond computation in the estimation of the simple people of Liberty. Vara actually stood as bridesmaid to Miss Susan Trover, and laughed at the absurdity of her position. It was very droll to see her father in white kids and white silk vest, with Valenciennes lace on his cravat. She had never before observed but that he made a passable appearance in company, a plain, unpretending man at his ease, because not thinking of himself. But to-day, in the midst of these grand people, and all this glitter and display, he was so perturbed, so awkward, and so constantly doing the wrong thing. She was sorry for him, and yet, in spite of herself, amused; she did long to steal up behind him, and whisper in his ear, "dear father, just don't mind them; there is no one here who is any better than you; and you will do well enough if you will only be quiet." But she had her own part to perform,—and how funny that was!—bridesmaid to a woman she had not the slightest interest in;—and the bridegroom, not merely detestable to herself, but for a whole year preceding this auspicious day, her own ardent admirer and persecuting suitor. She could hardly control her sense of the humorous and ridiculous, which so largely entered into the whole affair, when Mr. Hamilton, after the ceremony, with a quizzical look, for he knew it all, wished her joy at her brother's marriage.

Mrs. John Stephens stood at least half an inch higher than usual, when, late in the afternoon, attired in a white velvet hat and towering white feathers, and most costly veil, she waved her adieus from the steps of her own splendid equipage. Mrs. Daniel Stephens languished and simpered more than ever, as she tripped down the steps in a white silk hat, wreathed with orange blossoms and covered with

another most costly veil, and sank back in her father's family carriage. Vara's eye twinkled with fun, as she was assisted into the same receptacle, by the polite groomsman, and the grand cavalcade moved on to the cars. Only once her radiant face borrowed a shadow from a passing painful thought, as they drove past the house of Mr. Harris, where poor Sarah wept that day; even Daniel seemed, just at that minute, somewhat disturbed in mind, and threw himself back to the farthest extent of the deep seat. Was it that he might not see? or might not be seen? or was it accidental? Vara could not determine. But the shaking of hands, and the passing of congratulations in the crowded room of the depôt, and the rampant snorting of the locomotive, the confusion of finding seats in the cars, and then the deafening noise of the rapid movement, soon drove every thought from Vara's mind, except that she was going to New York, and *that* in very queer company!

XVI.

Fashionable Gaiety and Stately Seclusion.

“ These are the worldlings, and their world’s delights,
 Whose longing, God knows, is not worth the loving :
 These are the objects of those evil sights,
 That Virtue hath from her fair eyes removing ;
 These are the passions of corruption’s proving :
 But they that love and long for God, his sight,
 In worldly trifles never take delight.”

“ Nature hath her unities, which not every critic can penetrate; or, if we feel, we cannot explain them.”

CHARLES and Matilda Boyle, and dear Kate Granger, were delighted to see Vara once more. She remained with them a month, and then spent a week with each of the other married sisters. She was taken wherever she wished to go—to churches, to concerts, and to lectures; and, sometimes, where she did not desire to go, to parties and gay assemblages. She saw the world,—the gay and fashionable world. She saw and was dazzled, pleased, fascinated, perplexed, alarmed, grieved and disgusted in turn. She had gone through the ordeal, as her mother had before her, and, like her, she came out pure and unspotted.

At first, when Vara appeared in public, she was an object of attention. Some predicted that she would be the belle of the season. Her beauty attracted the young; the recollection of her mother interested the old. She was not so handsome, yet even more beautiful than her mother had been. She was not so tall, not so majestic, but she was, if possible, more graceful, and certainly more artless; and then her eye, what was there in it, so deep, so bewitching, so inexplicable. But the buzz of admiration soon subsided into an inaudible hum. She was quiet and reserved. The

juvenile beaux were afraid she was a little blue. She did not dance. Her musical accomplishments were not exactly of the fashionable style. Above all, she was not rich—at least very doubtfully so. The result was, that she soon fell back into the set of the nobodies, receiving little attention, save when her beauty startled some stranger into seeking an introduction. “Who is she?” was asked one night, loudly enough for her to hear. “Oh,” was the answer, “only a heathen novelty in the shape of a missionary’s beautiful daughter.” But this heathen novelty proved to be a serious attraction to that particular inquirer; for thenceforth he followed her about with most assiduous attentions. He was not young, nor handsome, nor agreeable. Vara supposed he sought her, because no one else would take the trouble of entertaining him. She took pity on him. She always made room for him by her side. She even solicited his approach when she saw him standing apart by himself. In the charity of a good heart, she strove to make him feel at his ease. Little did she imagine that she was provoking the envy and jealousy of manœuvring mothers and scheming daughters; and vast was her astonishment, when Charles Boyle informed her that a certain millionaire had intimated his intentions of proposing for her hand, and had assured him that he had reason to be most sanguine of success. It was even so. Mortified and grieved enough was Vara to find that she had been unconsciously captivating one of the richest bachelors in New York. Charles Boyle was at first disposed to resist the irrevocable rejection of this suit. He urged Vara’s youth, the change in her views and feelings which a year or two might produce, the boundless means of usefulness which wealth affords, and the reputation for integrity of character and kindness of heart which was universally accorded to the rich lover. Vara listened smilingly to all his arguments. She did not attempt their logical refutation. She had been playing with the guitar while he talked, and when he had finished she sung him a little song, as half in jest and half in earnest,

“What are all the charms of earth—
All its pride, its treasures worth,
With no partner at your side,
Thoughts and feelings to divide?”

" But without Divine communion,
What is nature's tenderest union;
'Tis no portion for the soul,
Joy to fix, or grief control.

" Where no heavenly love is found,
There can human long abound;
Iron there, the silken chain,
'Tis mere doubleness of pain."

Vara was inexorable. The explanation that followed was an awkward affair ; but Charles Boyle, when he learned the true state of the case, and saw that he could not prevail on Vara to accept of a fortune, kindly helped her out of the difficulty as well as he could.

This misadventure hastened Vara's departure from the city to visit her father's relations in New England. These consisted of two maiden aunts, one cousin, and an indefinite number of cousins of an indefinite degree. Her first visit was to her father's aunts.

These aunts were very peculiar. Vara was prepared to find them so by their very letter of invitation. She was requested to give them a week's notice—to mention the exact day on which she would arrive, and to be sure and bring her best bonnet and dresses, as they wished to see the latest fashions.

Due notice having been given, and a proper escort secured, Vara was duly carried by steam-boat and stage to the old homestead of her forefathers on the banks of the Connecticut.

She found her aunts dressed as if for the reception of a grand company. The elder, tall and spare, was attired in brown satin, a little scanted in the skirt, and showing evident signs of repairs and alterations; her collar, composed of several layers of wide rich lace, was fastened with an old-fashioned brooch, in which shone one real diamond, and did not shine two imitation diamonds, the poor substitutes for the real but lost ; and on her head was wreathed a turban of the snowiest lawn, fringed with lace, and drawn at the side through a gold ring. The younger sister was dressed in a pearl-coloured silk, flounced from waist to hem ; a French-work collar ; a massive gold chain clasped tightly round the

thin neck ; and an expansive gossamer cap, of lace and flowers, on her head. Each held in one hand a single rosebud and geranium leaf ; and in the other, though it was still cold weather, supported the one by a blue, and the other by a pink ribbon, an elaborately carved mother-o'-pearl fan. As the door of the large parlour was thrown open, and Vara was announced, there they stood in the middle of the room, Miss Hetty, the elder and taller, a little in advance—Miss Jane, the younger, a little in the rear. Each, with the left hand, containing the tiny nosegay, laid upon the bosom ; and each with the right hand, suspending the fan, extended towards the door.

Vara paused in astonishment. Were they animate or inanimate ; real or unreal ? Might she laugh, or must she speak ? While she hesitated, Miss Hetty, satisfied, doubtless, that the first impression was what it should be, deigned to speak, and while she spoke, Vara could not help wondering how old she was ; whether she was over 70, or under 50, it was impossible to decide ; and of her sister, it could only be said, that she appeared to be somewhat younger than Miss Hetty.

"Miss Austen," said the lady, with an inclination of the head, "Miss Vara Austen,"—a lower inclination,—"*our* niece,"—she took her hand,—"*you are welcome*," and she impressed a kiss on her forehead.

"You are very welcome, niece Vara," said Miss Jane, coming forward, taking her hand, and imprinting a kiss, with a precision of action, worthy of a military parade, except for the grace of the long sweeping courtesy. Julius, bring the wine and cake."

"Yes'm," answered the black boy who had ushered Vara in.

Old-fashioned cordials in old-fashioned cut and gilt glass, the best and newest of currant wine, and the daintiest of cake, were passed to each, on a silver tray.

"Here is to your health, and you are welcome, Vara," said Miss Hetty.

"Very welcome," added Miss Jane.

"You had a safe journey ?" asked Miss Hetty.

"Oh yes, aunt—" and she hesitated.

"Aunt Hetty, and my sister is Aunt Jane," said the former. "Would you like to remove your bonnet and shawl?"

"If you please."

Aunt Jane led the way to her room; and, kissing again the face that beamed upon her so sweetly, remarked that it wanted an hour of dinner time, and she could, if she chose, arrange her wardrobe in sundry drawers and closets, which were already opened for its reception, and strewed with rose-leaves.

Vara, left to herself, had no disposition to follow this advice. There was too much to be seen and examined.

The room was on the lower floor. It had once been an immense drawing room. But as the family grew smaller, and furniture scarcer through loss by decay and accident, this had been transformed into a bed-room. Indeed, as Vara afterwards ascertained, the first story of the house was all that was now inhabitable. There was little up stairs, but odd pieces of broken furniture and sundry vast clothes-presses.

Vara's attention was first arrested by the bedstead, which was the most conspicuous object in this large apartment. She was astonished at the dimensions of its length and breadth, its great height from the floor, and the curious expedient of mahogany and carpeted steps, at the side, to assist in mounting. "Surely," thought Vara, "I can never sleep there! I shall suffocate in such a mass of feathers and under such a canopy of silk; and what if there should be fire in the night! I shall hurt myself in attempting to get out!" If the bed needed steps to ascend it, the chimney-piece required a ladder to reach it. The opening below was large enough for Vara to stand in it, and it was lined with Dutch tiles; could anything be more curious? But she had not time to examine the contents of the chamber with half the scrutiny they deserved; the deep cushioned seats in the low, small-paned windows; the antique chairs; the pictures painted in oils, or in water-colours, or the pictures of ladies, and parrots, and peacocks, and various birds, done in feathers and silk embroidery; and the India china vases, and jars, and cups, and candlesticks; but what after all, rivetted her attention, was the view from the windows, and on this she was gazing when the bell rang for dinner.

The dinner, though there was little of it, was excellent of its kind, and was served with a wonderful degree of ceremony, considering that Julius was the only waiter. Indeed, everything about the house wore an air of stateliness, so different from anything Vara had ever seen, as first to overawe and then to charm her. She could easily fancy that her aunts were dowager princesses at least, living on somewhat reduced incomes, retired from the world to this decayed ancestral estate. The house itself was a grand affair; a house of the olden time; spacious and numerous were the rooms, ancient and curious the furniture; a family mansion, redolent of past grandeur, when the coach, now crumbling to pieces in an outhouse, was drawn by four and sometimes by six horses, and postilions, outriders, lacqueys, and servants abounded in gold lace and velvet. It was beautifully situated, on the outskirts of a New England village, overlooking a picturesque and highly-cultivated country, through which the broad Connecticut was visible for at least a mile of its course.

Vara embraced the first opportunity, when her aunts retired for their customary nap after dinner, to stroll along the banks of this tranquil river. Since leaving her island-home, she had wandered beside no stream of water so large. She recalled many a childish fancy, long since forgotten, which had often amused her idle hours when she sat and dreamed by the waters that washed her island-home: she thought of the wild and poetical stories of Rutea of the race of water-spirits—how they “inhabit a region of light and beauty,” “beneath the resounding domes of crystal,” where the “lofty coral trees glow with blue and crimson fruits,” where the glittering sea-sand is studded with “infinitely variegated shells,” and where the gigantic monuments of the old world, “which the floods covered with their secret veils of silver,” “glimmer below stately and solemn, bedewed by the water which loves them,” and covered with “exquisite moss-flowers and enwreathing tufts of sedge.” Transported by fancy, she could almost believe herself once more a child at home. The river was very unlike the dear Lagoon. But her vivid imagination, prompted by her heart, fancied a hundred points of resemblance. Seating herself under a rock,

where the ripples almost washed her feet, she gave herself up to the fond delusion that she was indeed at home in the beautiful island. Long she sat and dreamed. "Yonder, over that bank,—reef, I mean," she said to herself, "is the dashing ocean, and behind me—but I will not look, for fear I should not see them—are the cocoa-nut trees; and back of them again is the mission-house: dear father and mother are there thinking and talking of me; they wonder why I stay so long;—oh, how long it is in truth! But stop, I will not think of that now; I feel as if I was very near them, only the grove and those few rocks between us, and now they send Rutea to seek me. Dear Rutea; how long it is since I have heard the sound of her name, often as I think of it. I mean to call it now, and fancy she answers me; and then I will have a good talk with her in the almost forgotten language of her race; she is just behind this rock, beneath which I sit." "Rutea," "Rutea," she called first softly, then louder.

"Ma'am!" was the startling and audible response from behind the rock where she had placed the imaginary Rutea.

Vara sprang to her feet, in a tremor of surprise. In the next moment, Julius Cæsar's black, shiny face, protruded from behind the rock. "Please, ma'am, the ladies thought you was lost, and sent me to call you to tea."

"Tea-time already! could it be possible?"

The evening passed in much pleasant conversation; and at last, with a wax candle in a giant of a silver candlestick, which she could hardly carry, Vara retired to her room.

Her preparations being made, she looked with some trepidation at the bed. She carried the candle to the chair nearest to the bed, put one foot on the steps, extinguished the light, and found herself in total darkness; not only were the heavy window-curtains down, but the shutters had been closed on the outside. Vara had a horror of excluding every ray of light from her sleeping chamber; she was, too, afraid wearied as she was by the day's journey, that she might shock her aunts by late rising. In an evil hour, she essayed to find and open one of the massive windows. She had not taken three steps from the bed before she became completely bewildered. In the immensity of the room she was completely lost. With her hands before her she crept about,

now in one direction, now in another, without ever reaching any tangible object. Neither chair, table, bureau, nor bedstead could she find. It seemed to her that she walked miles and spent hours in this fruitless search. She grew nervous ; was sure either that she had the night-mare, or else that the furniture had disappeared by magic.

"The shadow of a fear
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper to the ear,
The place is haunted !"

What house more likely to be so than this superannuated mansion ? She was afraid to hear the sound of her own voice, even if she had not been deterred from calling out by a sense of shame in so disturbing this orderly and precise family. She was somewhat tremulous, too, at the bare thought of the sudden apparition of her aunts. They were so odd : she half-suspected them now of being witches. She nerved herself to a desperate effort. Suddenly she was aware that she was no longer walking on a carpet : the floor felt hard and cold to her slippered feet. She stretched out her hands ; they touched a cold, clammy substance ; shivering she turned, and took two or three steps in an opposite direction, and again she felt the cold, clammy touch ; she turned once more, and again she felt it, and it felt like death ! The conviction rushed upon her—she was immured in a sepulchre. She shrieked aloud in a panic of terror, again, and again and again. There were sounds of approaching footsteps. She grew calmer. The door was thrown open, and, with the first blaze of light, she discovered that she was in the fire-place of the chimney, her face to the back, and the cold Dutch tiles all around her. With mingled feelings of relief and shame she turned and saw her aunts. They did not see her. They were hunting for her in the bed, and under the bed, and about the bed, with many an antiquated ejaculation of wonderment and alarm. They did not see her, but she saw them ; and what a sight ! There they stood, two tall, lank figures in white, each with a candle held over the head, and each holding up one long bony hand in an expression of amazed consternation ! She tried to command herself enough to speak ; but her nervous system had been too much

excited. At the very top of her voice, she enunciated the one word "Aunt," and burst into a frantic fit of laughter. The indignation of the old ladies, when they discovered her standing in the chimney, laughing at them, waxed great. But when she began to cry, as well as laugh, and manifested symptoms of hysterics, then anger changed to concern. Hartshorn, valerian, lavender and paregoric, were rapidly sought for and found, and, whether she would or not, she had to take them. The true state of the case was soon explained. They would not listen to the opening of a shutter, for fear of robbers ; but their room adjoined hers. They burned a taper ; and they would leave their door ajar. Vara wished they had shut it, for she shook so, after they had disappeared, with repressed laughter, that she longed to laugh out and have done with it. She laughed, it seemed to her, all night, and, in the morning, she awoke laughing, while a bright sun streamed in at the windows, which had been already noiselessly opened.

XVII.

Relations, Strange and Estranged.

"For we are the same things our fathers have been,
 We see the same sights that our fathers have seen,
 We drink the same stream, and we feel the same sun.
 And we run the same course that our fathers have run.

"They died—ay, they died—and we, things that are now,
 Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
 Who make in their dwellings a transient abode,
 Meet the changes they met on their pilgrimage road."

"Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
 And Laughter, holding both his sides."

"When the cares and coldness of the world come withering to our hearts; when we find how hard it is to find true sympathy, how few love us for ourselves, how few will befriend us in our misfortunes; then it is we think of the mother we have lost."

THE visit, begun with this singular adventure, was one of great pleasure to Vara. Her aunts, it is true, were stately and formal; nursing the pride of ancestry on the smallest incomes, with, what Vara soon discovered to be, the most rigid system of economy; and strangely given to that personal vanity, a passion for dress, spending much of their time and thought in remodeling and modernizing the heir-looms of silk, satin, and velvet, which had descended to them from their ancestors. Yet their hearts were full of simplicity and benevolence. If Vara had to be a little precise in her manners, and school her vivacity into quietness, and if she had to be very careful not to offend some few little whims and prejudices of the dear old ladies, yet they were very kind, and, on the whole, very considerate of her, and she loved them.

They told her much of the family history, of which owing to her age when she left her island-home, and the little there was there to suggest the topic, she knew

nothing. She now learned that her father passed his boyhood in this mansion; that his father resided here many years a widower, with no society but that of his son and maiden sisters, husbanding the resources of the family, that he might give his son a liberal education; that the picture she had admired, in the old parlour, where was the Turkish carpet, was the likeness of her father's mother; that *their* grandfather and *her* great-great-grandfather had built this house, and had lived in princely magnificence; that he had a large family; that the homestead had descended to their father and her great-grandfather; that his share of the property did not enable him to live so sumptuously as his father had; that, in order to increase his means, he had entered into unfortunate speculations, which had nearly stripped them of everything; and that now they had only a life-interest in this old house, which, at their death, would become the property of her father; that they could never forgive him for deserting the country; they respected missionaries, but *he* owed something to the name of Austen! and their hope now was, that she would marry, inherit that house, and restore it to its former grandeur!

"Oh! dear Aunt Hetty," said Vara, when she first heard the expression of this wish, "would it not be a higher, a nobler object, to seek the restoration of poor fallen human creatures to the glorious mansions of Heaven?"

"Tush! my child, that is the way your father used to talk. You can do your duty to God and man without being a missionary."

"But what, Aunt, if God calls me to be a missionary?"

"Your first duty, Vara, is to your family!"

Vara smiled; her aunts were too old to be talked out of the prejudices of a lifetime.

They told her much of her father which she loved to hear. She learned from them what sacrifices he had made in entering the ministry, and what opposition he had breasted in devoting himself to a missionary career. "He never would have gone," they said, "if their brother had been alive. Alfred always was wayward; only his father could manage him." And yet, severely as his aunts reflected

on his conduct in this particular, they evidently appreciated and admired, while they deplored, the magnanimity of that Christian spirit which had laid all at the foot of the cross. Much, too, they praised her mother; her piety, her sense, her taste, her beauty, her elegance. "Most deplorable, indeed," said Aunt Hetty, "and a dark day for the house of Austen, when two such glorious creatures exiled themselves to a savage island. It was like casting pearls before—" and the old lady called for her gold vinaigrette.

The old ladies never tired of talking, nor Vara of listening; and many were the stories they told of the olden times, of the traditionary visits to that mansion of colonial governors and princes of the blood; of recollected balls and dinners, when ladies wore hoops and gentlemen wigs; of weddings and deaths; of the venerable grandfather and the extraordinary dancing-master, who had instructed them in those matters of form and etiquette, carriage and gesture, which they still followed with as much precision as if they were still responsible to those ancient, but long since defunct worthies.

Old Phillis, too, the black woman in the kitchen, had her tales to tell of the family and of "the young ladies," as she always persevered in calling Aunt Hetty and Aunt Jane. She had been a slave in the family, and her mother before her, and Judy, the maid of all work, and Julius Cæsar, the waiter, were her grand-children. Phillis herself did little but talk.

Vara was shown by her aunts such piles and heaps of finery, as she could hardly believe to have been accumulated by one family, and which testified at least the careful keeping they had received. Brocades, stiff with embroidery; satin and silk and velvet dresses, robe, bodice, stomacher complete; India mull dresses, worked, ruffled, and flounced; laces; feathers; artificial flowers; ribbons; spangles; bugles; and, what astonished her more than all, drawers full of shoes and slippers, high-heeled and low-heeled, satin, prunella, and buckskin, black, white, blue, red, and green.

Many were the pleasant walks she took. She formed agreeable acquaintances in the village: and much did she delight, on the silent Sabbath-day, to walk through the

grass-grown streets, between avenues of majestic trees, with so goodly a company, to the sacred house where pilgrim fathers once worshipped with simple rites and earnest hearts.

Thus passed rapidly three weeks. Sorry she was when the time came for her departure. Sorry, too, were her stately aunts.

The last words of Aunt Hetty, "Farewell, dear child, fear God and forget not that you are an Austen," sounded very much, she thought, like the Cromwellian exhortation, "Trust in Providence and keep your powder dry."

If Vara had experienced a great change in leaving New York, with its restless activities, for the spacious and empty mansion on the banks of the quiet Connecticut, still greater was the change from the etiquette and cheerful tranquillity of that mansion, to the noisy, laughing, talkative, lively family of Cousin Thornwell, in the town of Franklinburg, State of New York, some fifty miles from the metropolis.

Under the agreeable escort of the minister of the village church which her aunts attended, Vara had returned to New York, and, after spending a night with the Boyles, had accompanied Charles on a business tour to the west, as far as to Franklinburg; and, having been safely deposited by him in an omnibus, arrived at Mr. Thornwell's door just as a neighbouring clock pealed out the hour of twelve.

It was a narrow, three-story, brick house, with the least bit of a court-yard in front.

The noise in the parlour, audible even before the door was opened, prevented the approach of the omnibus from being heard; and she was ushered, without ceremony, into a room, where girls, books, chairs and tables, were strewn about in admirable confusion. On her appearance the clamour ceased, and three or four young ladies, with very red faces, dishevelled tresses and disordered dresses, picked themselves up from the floor, not without much subdued laughter. An elderly lady, in black silk, fat and good-natured, who evidently had been enjoying the fun, advanced with the salutation:

"This is cousin Austen's daughter, I suppose? We are

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glad to see you," and forthwith introduced her to Eliza Jane, Maria and Cynthia Thornwell, and their friends, Miss Smith and Miss Cogswell, more familiarly known as "Smith and Cogs."

Vara's first thought was—for the parlours were very narrow, and the two together, opening as they did with folding-doors, would scarcely make a good-sized drawing-room; the whole house seemed on an exceedingly diminutive scale to Vara, she having just left a large mansion with a small family,—her first thought was, "how can so many persons be accommodated in so small a house;" and her second thought was, "what can they do with me! Surely they have not a place to put me!"

On this point, however, she was soon at her ease. They were used to being crowded; they took it as a matter of course. They did not know that they were crowded. She had a very little room in the third story, over the entry, appropriated to herself. She at least was comfortable. As for the rest of the family, when she found there were another daughter and two boys, she was sure they must sleep in piles. But however they slept, they were always happy. She hardly knew what to make of them. They were novelties to her experience. Accustomed all her life to the society of the staid and the sober, she was astonished out of her senses, by the fun and the frolicking which were kept up in this family from morning to night, almost without cessation.

Mr. Thornwell himself was the leader in all that was droll and mirth-making. Like his wife, he was stout; but, unlike her, for she was always placid, he was boisterous. He was the cousin of her father on the side of her father's mother—a lawyer by profession, though it was to be presumed, from appearances, that his practice was not over lucrative. But if he made little money, he enjoyed what he made. How kindly he received Vara! There was a bluff courtesy about his salutation, notwithstanding its jollity.

"Hurrah here, girls!" he called, the moment he opened the front door, on coming home to dinner from his office, "where is that beautiful cousin of mine? The fame of her

beauty has spread from the omnibus all over the town, and you, girls, may hang your diminished heads. Hallo! I say, 'Liza, Ria, Cynth, Smith, Cogs, where are you all!'

Just then Vara herself, who had been shrinking back into the farthest corner of the platform of the stairs, made her appearance.

"Why, my dear little coz," he said, springing up two steps at a time, "I am right glad to see you;" he seemed equally glad to kiss her; "I loved you before I saw you, for your father's sake and mother's sake; and now that I have seen you, I love you for your own. I hope you will enjoy yourself while you stay with us, and that you will often repeat your visit."

"*Enjoyment*" seemed always uppermost in Mr. Thornwell's mind. She soon found that she had to enjoy herself whether she would or not. Their hilarity was infectious. Do what she would, she had to run, and romp, and laugh—laugh immoderately, till the tears rolled down her cheeks—with the rest of them.

The girls were sensible, and could be serious. They had many lady-like feelings and notions. They were full of unaffected kindness, and, without extravagant professions of love, they seemed from the first to appreciate Vara's worth. They admired her beauty. They had "never seen such hair in their lives;" and many times would one of them steal behind her, and, before she could prevent it, remove the comb, and display the whole luxuriant mass, no matter who were present, friends or strangers, men or women. Her musical powers they extolled as "splendid;" and sometimes annoyed her by an ambitious desire to "show off" her accomplishments before their acquaintances. On the whole, Vara regarded them as a good-natured family, with some refined feelings and "country manners," who only needed a little urbanizing to render them delightful companions, and a deeper sense of religious faith and duty to make them unexceptionably excellent.

She saw here a new phase of life; and, though not exactly sorry when the week, to which her visit was limited, came to an end, she could assure "Cousin Thornwell" that she *had* "*enjoyed herself*" greatly; certainly, if she had

ever enjoyed herself as much, she never had in the same way.

Again she returned to dear Kate Granger. A few days were spent in shopping and preparing such articles as she needed for the summer, and she was once more on her way to Liberty; not now, the pale, depressed, dispirited body she looked when she left, but blooming in health and overflowing with spirits;—wiser too, and better instructed in the ways of the world.

She was curious, rather than anxious, as to the manner in which the new Mrs. Stephens would receive her. She felt that her future happiness was not dependent on Mrs. Stephens' affection or courtesy.

Arrived at the depôt in Liberty, she found neither her father, nor Daniel, nor the new carriage; yet her coming was expected. Unused to travelling alone, she might have been embarrassed with the management of her baggage; but there were those there who knew her, and few knew who did not love her, and she soon found herself and her trunks deposited by helpful hands in an omnibus. With more than usual noise the heavy vehicle backed up against the pavement, but attracted no attention from the inmates of her father's house. A new servant appeared in answer to the bell, received directions to have the trunks carried up stairs, —and informed Vara that Mrs. Stephens "was out in the carriage." From the same source Vara ascertained that Daniel and his wife had taken up their quarters with Mr. Trover.

Late in the afternoon, while Vara was busy in her own room, the carriage rolled up to the door, and Mrs. Stephens, as Vara saw from her window, alighted. Vara wondered if she would be formally summoned to the parlour, or if Mrs. Stephens would come directly to her room to bid her welcome. Neither events occurred. Vara made no haste to go down. The tea-bell, indeed, had rung, before with due care and deliberation her preparations were complete.

They were seated at table when Vara entered. Mrs. Stephens raised her eyes with affected surprise, as she exclaimed, without rising or extending her hand: "Oh!

have you come!" "Yes, ma'am," answered Vara, with affected demureness, a spark of malicious fun kindling in her heart at the moment.

Mr. Stephens looked a little ashamed, and a good deal frightened, glancing alternately from his wife to Vara, as if imploring the command of the former, as to the manner in which he was to receive the latter.

Vara, however, was not to be disconcerted. She knew her duty and meant to do it. She walked up to Mr. Stephens, stooped down and kissed his forehead, and, stroking back his hair as she used to do, inquired if he was well. Then advancing, with lady-like grace, to Mrs. Stephens, who looked daggers from behind the new silver tea-set, extended her hand, and "hoped she was well."

Vara alone talked freely during the brief repast. She rattled on, telling what she had seen, whom she had met, and how much she had enjoyed, in her visit; concluding her account with an adroit allusion to the fact, that she must leave for school in two days.

Vara had come out in a new character. If Mrs. Stephens had intended to carry matters with a high hand, she was mistaken. The shy, meek, gentle girl had sprung up as in an hour, into a self-possessed, spirited woman. Either her recent familiarity with the society of strangers, or else the consciousness of approaching independence, had driven away her natural timidity. She even had the effrontery to say: "by-the-bye, father, as I have many calls to make to-morrow, before I leave town *for good*, I shall need the carriage. Mary," turning to the girl, "tell the coachman to be at the door punctually at eleven."

If she had always had command of a carriage, she could not have spoken with more nonchalance. Mrs. Stephens was speechless with surprise and anger. Mr. Stephens stupified more intensely than ever with amazement.

The next day was devoted to calls, to the packing of trunks, and the burning of papers.

The day after was dull and rainy. In spite of her efforts, Vara's spirits yielded to the depressing atmosphere. Drearly she surveyed her room, and felt she was yielding

possession of it for ever—possession of all, save the pictures on the walls, which she might hereafter claim. Every article had been bought for herself by her dear mother. Each had its pleasant associations. It was hard to part with them.

She stole up into the garret. She peered into all the corners. She drew out from its concealment many an old familiar article of dress or furniture, and bedewed it with her tears. Things which her mother had once valued, which she prized for her mother's sake, but which were now to all the rest of the world, and to that family in particular, nothing better than old lumber and trumpery. She opened a press; there hung her mother's hat, cloak, and dresses, just as she left them. This was too much. She sank down on the floor, buried her head in her lap, and sobbed aloud: the nervous, quick sob of an overwrought sensibility, the scalding tears which fall from the eyes of those most used to weeping not more than once or twice in a life-time. The fountain had been long gathering, and the floodgates once opened, it was long in emptying. It was the one and the only crying spell, at the sundering of the tie which bound her to this house as her home. Relieved at last, she rose, quietly shut the door of the press, without venturing another look at its contents, and turned to leave the garret. Her eye was caught by the glitter of the old brass candlesticks, once so bright in their uncomfortable position on the basement mantel-piece, now dusty and spotted. But what is that behind them? Yes: it is the picture of little Anna's grave. That, at least, she will rescue. And seizing the precious relic of Anna, of her mother, of Adele Boyle, and of many happy hours, for the picture spoke of all, she descended to her own room, and locked it in her trunk.

The picture suggested the grave-yard. She had yet half an hour. Her bonnet and shawl were quickly on. She ran down stairs, and out of the back-door. She sought the little spot which had always been her own garden. With both hands she dug up the roots of "forget-me-nots," that had grown there so many years. "I may as well take them," she said to herself, "for I shall be forgotten

soon enough whether they stay or go." Her veil down, and an umbrella over her head, unrecognised by any save Aunt Polly, to whom she motioned as she passed her window, that she would soon return, she made her way to the grave-yard.

Daniel had surrounded his mother's grave with a fanciful border of flowers, selected without taste or sentiment. She knew that neither he, nor his father, would be likely to visit the grave soon again. She pulled up the roots, and flung the plants away, and in the broken places in the ground, she deposited, one by one, her precious forget-me-nots.

The clock struck. She bent over, kissed the grave, and ran away. For one moment only she stopped at Aunt Polly's, threw her arms around the good lady's neck, kissed her on both cheeks, slipped into her hand a pair of gold spectacles she had bought for her in New York, and hurried off to the house.

The stage was at the door. Her trunks were already fastened in the boot. They were searching for her. She kissed her father good-bye; shook the three fingers of Mrs. Stephens's left hand; glanced sorrowfully down on the malicious face of Mrs. Tim Brown in the basement; cast one look at the dear trees that were growing thriftily in front of the house, which her mother had bought at her request, and she herself had helped to plant; threw herself back in the stage; and felt that she had now no home in America—no home in this world but the far-distant island-home!

XVIII.

Hasty Judgments and Rapid Conquests.

“ Let worldly men
 The cause and combatants contemptuous scorn,
 And call fanatics them who hazard health
 And life in testifying of the truth,
 Who joy and glory in the cross of Christ !
 What were the Galilean fishermen
 But messengers, commissioned to announce
 The resurrection and the life to come ?
 They, too, though clothed with power of mighty work
 Miraculous, were oft received with scorn ;
 Oft did their words fall powerless, though enforced
 By deeds that mark'd Omnipotence their friend ;
 But when their efforts fail'd, unweariedly
 They onward went, rejoicing in their course.”

“ **RODERICK !** Roderick Granger ! I say,—are you deaf ?”
 vociferated Howard Haywood, his college chum.

“ No !” answered Roderick, smiling.

“ I should think you were, for I have spoken to you half
 a dozen times, without receiving the slightest attention.”

“ I ask your pardon. The fact is, I was so deeply in-
 terested in this *Missionary Magazine*, that I did not hear
 you.”

“ *Missionary Magazine !* Nonsense ! Half-educated,
 gawky divinity-students, ‘ good and pious, but indigent
 young men,’ as the ladies’ sewing circles call them, hopeless
 of making a living at home, get up the story that all who
 die in ignorance of ‘ the evangelical doctrines of true spiri-
 tual religion,’ as the cant is, must go to hell, and they
 persuade silly people to give their money, and send them
 to Christianize the perishing heathen. That is the long and
 short of it ; and I believe that one-half of the missionaries
 are knaves, and the other half fools ; and the fools do about

as much harm to the poor heathen, by their injudiciousness, as the knaves do by their wickedness."

"Howard, you are not talking now like the philosopher you profess to be. You are yielding too much to the prejudices of the ignorant, and conceding far too much to the scandalous misrepresentations of bad men. Your remarks strike me the more unpleasantly, because of the contrast between their narrow-mindedness, and the expansive and majestic sentiments of the missionaries you so much despise. This very afternoon I have been impressed with the common-sense view of things which these missionaries take. Their opinions are so just; their reasonings so correct; their plans so practical and feasible; and, at the same time, their ideas have such magnitude and splendour of conception, as have led me to ponder the question, whether there be not something in the missionary work, which has a direct tendency to elevate the mind, quicken the sagacity, and give greater force to the character of those who engage in it?"

"I must say, Roderick, that your sentiments are novel, and, 'I rather guess,' quite unique, by which I mean that they are confined to yourself alone. You must confess, however, that the reports of travellers differ from those of the missionaries. The Sandwich Islands, for instance,—are not the eulogistic accounts of the missionaries, who claim to have converted those savages into Christians, contradicted in toto by the stories and asseverations of travellers?"

"Not exactly," answered Roderick. "Some of these travellers' stories bear internal evidence of their own falsity. Some are partly true; only a few are wholly so,—and, so far as they are true, they do not *contradict*, but rather *confirm* the testimony of the missionaries. The evils which these writers depict with so much gusto, are not only confessed, but even more fully detailed by the missionaries themselves. But those writers see only what is bad and not what is good. The missionaries see both; yes, they see more, they see what those islanders have been, they see what they now are, and they see what they are likely to become.—The fact is, Howard, no ordinary traveller or voyager can form a fair opinion of the results of missionary labour, or even of the

religious character of the people, in countries which he only casually visits."

"How so?"

"Religion is a matter of the heart. It is a hidden leaven. Much of it may exist where little is apparent to the outside observer."

"Roderick, did not the Lord Jesus say; that we were to judge religious teachers by the manifest effects of their labours; 'by their fruits ye shall know them'?"

"Yes. But we must first be sure as to the character of the fruits we are to look for, and then we must be careful to look for them at the right times, and in the proper places."

"Please explain yourself."

"Would it be well to judge of the piety of New York city, by what the passing traveller sees in hotels and at public places? Must we not rather search for piety in the hidden paths of life, in the modest retirement, where it shrinks from observation or display?"

"Well, cannot the traveller search it out?"

"Yes he can; but does he? Is he not more apt to judge of the whole, by the part which falls in his way. Consider, for instance, how different the impressions which might be made on two visitors by this same city of New York. We will suppose that both arrive on Saturday night. One, an irreligious man himself, puts up at a hotel 'down town.' All day Sunday the hotel is crowded; parlours, halls, tables, reading-rooms, full of talking, laughing, jesting, bustle and confusion; and the bar-room of drinking and smoking. He saunters out to look at the city; idlers hang about the corners; loafers loaf on the battery; pleasure-parties come or go in sail-boats, or row-boats. Steam-boats and ferry-boats receive and discharge crowds of passengers and piles of trunks; coaches are rumbling backwards and forwards; boys are crying Sunday papers; sailor boarding-houses, cellar-eating-saloons, and low groggeries, are full and reeking. In the course of the day he visits elegant billiard-rooms, splendid restaurants, places of infidel assemblages, and the lowest dens of drunkenness, gambling and infamy—hundreds of such places are open, and all are crowded. Perhaps, by way of variety, he drops in at some

fashionable church, and reflects as he gazes on the evidences of worldliness, and pomp and pride, there congregated, how little such religion can counteract the pestilential influences, poisoning the moral atmosphere from ten thousand sources of vice and wickedness. The next day he presents his letters of introduction, and the whole week is consumed in seeing all that is vile and bad in a great city. He eats costly dinners, in company with extravagant young men. He attends brilliant balls, where money is wasted in splendid profusion, and thought and time, souls and bodies of immortal creatures in wanton prodigality. He looks in upon German balls, and mechanic balls, and firemen balls, and sailor dances, and negro dances. He goes to theatre after theatre. He hears concerts professedly sacred, and concerts confessedly profane. He visits the elegant houses of luxurious courtesans and low houses, where vulgarity and poverty wallow in the style of sensuality. He learns the heartlessness, the licentiousness, and the irreligion of the wealthy, the gay and the fashionable. He learns the degradation of the vicious poor. He sees sinful pleasure disguised under the garb of a refined decency, and he sees her stripped stark naked in all her indecencies! Thoroughly disgusted, he leaves this wicked city: perhaps he writes a book, and tells the world that New York is the most corrupt city on the earth, utterly devoid of piety, or even morality, and that Christianity *there* has proved a preposterous failure!"

"I am glad, Roderick," said Howard, "that you have finished your black catalogue. I never before had so terrible an opinion of New-York. I am ashamed to acknowledge it as my birth-place."

"But hear me out," said Roderick.

"No, no, I thank you. Please, Rod, spare me. I am tired."

"Yes, I insist on your hearing. We took another friend with us. Would you leave him wandering about in the streets of your great Babylon all Saturday night? Perhaps, if you should, he would see more wickedness in that city of your birth, than you would care to have fall under the eye of a stranger."

"Well, if I must, I must," said Howard, stretching out his legs on the study lounge, with an air of resignation. "But please be short."

"I will. Our other friend seeks the house of a Christian relative in the upper part of the city ; and before retiring to rest he kneels with the household, around the family altar, to ask a preparation of heart for the approaching Sabbath-day. Sunday morning the streets are comparatively quiet. He visits a Sunday-school : it is large and interesting. He attends church : the congregation is numerous and attentive ; the services devout and earnest. In the afternoon he attends another church ; the Sunday-School is not yet dismissed, and he observes that the teachers and scholars seem engaged in their work ; the congregation is serious ; the sermon warm, practical and direct. He visits with his friend still another Sunday-school, gathered in the worst part of the city, poor outcast children. He steps into a Bethel church ; he looks in upon Sailors' Homes ; he accompanies a colporteur to his Sunday-evening Bible class of grown-up men and women ; he passes by churches that are crowded with worshippers ; and he hears the voice of prayer and praise from many a private residence. During the ensuing week he visits the Bible House, the Tract House, the American Sunday School Rooms, and many places consecrated to denominational zeal and love. He attends the meetings of various associations, charitable, literary, and religious, and prayer-meetings, and Bible-classes and lectures. He accompanies the tract distributor and the visitor of the poor on their rounds. He takes a hasty survey of asylums, and homes, and hospitals, and libraries. Men of wealth are pointed out to him, distinguished for personal excellence and princely munificence ; and he forms the acquaintance of a multitude of pious persons, adorning with their graces the highest and the lowest walks of life. And, after a week of unalloyed pleasure, this man also leaves the city ; but he leaves it, believing that the city of New York is consecrated to piety and virtue above any place on the earth !"

"Well, I think better of old New-York, Rod."

"But, Howard, which of these two men is right in the judgment he passes on New York society ?"

"Neither, of course."

"Well, then, have I not established my position that the ordinary traveller is not qualified to pass judgment on the religious character of a people?"

"I give in, Roderick; not so much because I am convinced, as because I cannot very readily answer your argument. But now, my dear, good fellow, I do wish you would stop reading those missionary papers. I fear you will become infatuated with what you conceive to be 'the grandeur of their ideas.' I never oppose your religious notions in other respects; I listen to you patiently; I like to hear you pray, because I believe, whatever others are, *you* are sincere, though just a little bit fanatical, Rod! But should you ever become a missionary, it would break my heart. It would, indeed. I could not bear to see your fine abilities so utterly thrown away."

"Thank you for your love, Howard."

"Rod, do you know, I sometimes suspect that your religious and missionary zeal may all be laid at the door of that pretty missionary cousin you so often talk about?"

"Perhaps it may, How," smiling. "I must acknowledge that her childish piety first led me to think of these things. But, as I have not seen her in four years, her influence cannot be very prodigious."

Just then a bevy of young men burst into the room, all vociferating, and each trying to speak first.

"Rod! How! I say, Rod! O, How!"

"Silence!" cried Howard. "One at once, if you please. Now, Hal, you entered first; what is it?"

"Nothing," said Hal, "to make such a dreadful fuss about, seeing that I am the best looking man in the company, and therefore have the best chance,"—making a low bow and grimace all around.

"Come, Hal, or I'll tell myself," shouted two or three voices.

"The long and short of it is, then, that we have seen the very prettiest, the most beautiful, the most angelic girl, that ever alighted from a stage-coach and four in this town. Brown hair,—"

"No, auburn," interrupted another.

"Blue eyes,—"

"No, no, Black !"

"Rosy cheeks, aquiline nose, carnation lips, perfect foot, head set superbly on the shoulders, and a carriage that would be queenly, if it were not so fairy-like graceful. Judge of our ecstasy after having seen this vision of beauty. We have promenaded, backward and forward, for one mortal hour, before Madam Gridiron's school, to catch but one more glimpse of that face, and not a glimpse did we get."

"Yes, I did one ;" interjected another voice.

"And now, having talked ourselves into pangs of jealousy and fits of rage, one towards another, we have come here, most sapient judges, to ask your solemn decision, as to which has the best claim upon her favour,—he who was the first to discover her beauty in the stage-coach, or he who opened the gate for her, that's I myself ! and received a bow and a smile that will make my heart happy for ever !"

"I am afraid *she* will acknowledge the claims of neither. He that first knows her will have a better chance," said Howard.

"I know most about her, I guess," said a little fellow who had been kept quite in the back-ground.

"What do *you* know ?" shouted a dozen voices.

"I know her initials,—saw them on her trunk."

"Pshaw !" said Hal, "to look at her trunk, when her face was in sight !"

"Well, what are they, Willie ?" asked Roderick, as the diminutive informant was sinking back again, at this repulse, to his former obscurity, wishing that he had been less communicative.

"They were V. A.," said he, brightening up again, as he found his information not wholly despised, "'V. A.' in large black letters, as plain as could be."

"V. A., V. A.," repeated Roderick, half audibly, "that is singular—V. A., Vara Austen."

A knock at the door interrupted his reflections. A letter was presented, directed to Mr. Roderick Granger. He tore the envelope and read,

"DEAR COUSIN,—If you will call at Mrs. Gerardine's,

when you can spare time, you will hear from your friends in New York, (I enclose a letter from Kate,) and see your old friend,

“VARA AUSTEN.”

“Hurrah!” shouted Roderick, excited now fully as much as his noisy companions; “hurrah, boys! I have the best chance. Your beauty is my cousin. This is a letter from her. How! my missionary cousin herself, Vara Austen.”

“You shall introduce me,”—“and me,”—“and me,” echoed on all sides; and for the next half hour Roderick was fully employed answering questions concerning his beautiful cousin.

Mr. Hamilton, who had chosen the school, and was a personal friend of Mrs. Gerardine, had prepared the way for Vara’s reception. She was warmly welcomed, and immediately installed in such privileges as are conceded in boarding-schools to advance scholars who are in “the finishing off department,” as Howard Haywood called it. Her wish to become herself a teacher had been communicated by Mr. Hamilton to Mrs. Gerardine, who afforded her frequent opportunities of exercising her talents in the instruction of the lower classes.

Vara soon grew to be the favourite in the school, both with teachers and scholars. Unruly girls, with whom all kinds of discipline had failed, yielded to her persuasive influence; and dull girls woke up, and threw off their ordinary stupidity when Vara taught them.

Vara was happy, very happy. She missed some comforts to which she had been accustomed. She sometimes wearied of the incessant routine of school life. She longed more than all for a quiet room to herself, where she could be oftener alone, instead of the dormitory, by no means spacious, furnished with two beds besides her own, and scant of conveniences. But the advantages she now enjoyed were ample compensation for a few deficiencies or annoyances. Mrs. Gerardine was an accomplished teacher, and was well supported by able assistants. Vara, with the older scholars,

had the privilege of attending some of the courses of lectures delivered by the professors in the college. In the small but select society to which she was introduced, she came in contact with men of genius and learning. She was a frequent guest at cheerful and rational tea-drinkings and evening parties ; at which gatherings Roderick had the opportunity of introducing to his friends the cousin, whose advent to the collegiate town had made so great a sensation ; but Roderick took good care to maintain his self-assumed position of general and particular protector and escort.

XIX.

Old Friends in New Dresses.

"Condemne me not unto the hell of riches,
Without Thy grace to counter-charme the witches."

"She knows not of her loveliness,
And little thinks the while
How the very air grows beautiful,
In the beauty of her smile."

THE first session sped away. The fall vacation arrived. Vara had received no intimation that she was desired, or even expected, to spend that vacation in Liberty. She was somewhat embarrassed to know how to proceed. Mr. Stephens, however, was her father, and his house her proper "home," or that domicile which the world would call her home. She duly notified Mr. Stephens, by letter, that she might be expected at Liberty on such a day, and that after spending a few days there, if he had no objections, she would like to visit her friends in New York. To this communication no answer was returned; and on the day appointed, Vara started in such spirits as might be surmised of a reluctant visitor in anticipation of a cold welcome.

No letters had passed between her father and herself, beyond the simple announcement of her first arrival at school, which she had written as in duty bound, but to which she had received no reply. She had heard, however, from Mr. Hamilton, with whom she maintained an occasional correspondence, that her father had bought and removed to the Granger mansion; and that Daniel had taken possession of the old house in the dusty street which Vara had so long loved as home.

She was afterwards to learn that Mr. Trover was worth nothing; that the mansion he had pretended to buy, he had

never paid for; that Mrs. Stephens had compelled her husband to become its purchaser, and to save the furniture and decorations from an execution; that Mr. Trover had condescended to accept of a home in his daughter's house; and that Daniel's amiability had received a new infusion of gall and wormwood by the discovery that his wife was as penniless as she was senseless.

Greatly to Vara's surprise, she found this time the carriage in waiting for her at the *dépôt* in Liberty. Mrs. Stephens had changed her tactics, and Vara found it more difficult to out-manceuvre her. She received her with all that assumed cordiality and studied politeness, which one shows to a visitor who is on the most formal terms. She was ready to meet her in the parlour, dressed to her very gloves; she advanced the moment Vara opened the door,—“was happy to receive a *visit* from her,”—Vara remarked the word and emphasis,—“hoped she was well,”—rang the bell, and directed the servant to show Miss Austen her room, that she might remove her bonnet and shawl.

A few days served to give Vara an insight into the existing state of affairs. Her father was sad and forlorn. He seldom spoke, and when he did, it was in a voice so subdued, that it pained Vara to the heart. Mrs. Stephens seemed hardly aware of the existence of her husband. She was full of business and self-importance. She took the whole charge of the house, garden, conservatory, and grounds; gave orders, enlarged, demolished, and rebuilt, without so much as consulting her husband. She dressed elaborately; kept a waiting-maid; gave expensive entertainments; was already preparing for an endless succession of visitors during the ensuing winter; and, as Vara could easily see, was spending her husband's money with the most heedless extravagance. Mr. Trover, her father, was her right hand man. He waited upon her beck and nod. Vara was amused at the evident fear which he felt towards his daughter, annoyed by the officious politeness he showed to herself, and irritated by the supercilious insolence with which he treated Mr. Stephens.

Except for the hurried “grace” at meals, Vara could not have suspected that she was in a nominally Christian

family. In vain she waited for the summons to the family prayer, or the invitation to Mr. Hamilton's weekly lecture. On Sundays, indeed, Mrs. Stephens flourished to church and home again, in all the pride of dress and equipage; and Mr. Stephens occasionally stole away to a prayer-meeting or conference, either from the force of habit, or from some sense of what was becoming in an elder of the church;—but this was all.

"What is that you were singing, Vara?" asked Mrs. Stephens, as Vara one day abruptly ceased her song on the entrance of that lady into the room. "The air is very sweet. I should like to hear the words."

Vara with some hesitation complied, and sung these two stanzas:

"Does pure religion charm thee
Far more than aught below?
Wouldst thou that she should arm thee
Against the hour of woe?
Think not she dwelleth only
In temples made for prayer;
For home itself is lonely,
Unless her smiles be there.
The devotee may falter,
The bigot blindly roam;
If worshipless her altar
At home! dear home!

"Love over it presideth,
With meek and watchful awe;
Its daily service guideth,
And shows its perfect law.
If there thy faith shall fail thee,
If there no shrine be found,
What can thy prayers avail thee,
With kneeling crowds around?
Go leave thy gift unoffered
Beneath Religion's dome;
And be her first-fruits proffered
At home! dear home!"

Glad was Vara when the time came for her to fly to dear Kate Granger. Sorry she was to renew her short formal visit at each successive vacation; and always happy to escape, whether to the old, empty mansion, and the prim, dressy and fussy, but good aunts, on the banks of the Connecticut, or to the loving friends in New York, or even, for

a few days at a time only, to the hearty and noisy Thornwells in Franklinburg, where she always had to '*enjoy herself*,' whether she would or not.

In due course of time, Vara was advanced to the post of teacher; and Roderick Granger had exchanged the college for the theological seminary, with Howard Haywood,—who had ceased to think Roderick fanatical, or to rail at ministers and missionaries,—still for his chum and intimate friend.

"Howard," said Roderick one day, "do you know *why* I love Vara Austen so much?"

"Because, of course, like all lovers, you regard her as a perfect angel; and I do not know but that you are nearly right."

"No, Howard, it is no such thing. *I* could not love a perfect character as I love *her*. She would be too far removed from my own badness. I love her particularly and especially,—mind now, Mr. Theologian, I do not justify myself for doing so, I merely confess the sin,—I love her particularly and especially, because there is a spark of our common depravity in her—just a little spice of wickedness, that flavours a degree of excellence, which, in an ordinary character, would be insipid, or would repel a heart of flesh and blood from true fellowship and sympathy!"

"Roderick, you are right! I take your meaning. I do not like your way of expressing it, and yet I cannot give it a better expression. I thank you for a new idea, Rod. I must turn it over in my mind awhile to get at the truth of it; for, somehow, you have given the truth in form of an untruth, or at least of an enigma."

"Well, How, let me solve the enigma for you. You cannot be intimate with Vara, without discovering many indications of a natural disposition which has been subdued, and is constantly controlled by the firmest adherence to Christian principles. It is evident that she is hasty and impetuous in temper: her spirit is as quick and ardent as nativity in the tropics could make it; and yet how self-governed and self-contained. Her antipathies to persons and things are instinctive and violent; but always resisted, often conquered, never indulged. Her perception of the

ridiculous is more acute than that of any person I ever met. She could be quizzical or satirical at pleasure; but I never knew her by smile, word or gesture, wound the feelings of another, or offend against the most refined notions of politeness and propriety. She has a taste for the beautiful, and even for the gorgeous, the magnificent and the luxurious; and yet she can be happy without any of the appliances of wealth. To my certain knowledge she has rejected at least one millionaire, and she lived contentedly in her childhood, in a tasteless home, surrounded by uncongenial 'folks,' as they very properly called themselves. She was herself the child of sensibility and imagination; and yet she loved those who were not, appreciated their more solid qualities, and sought to emulate them. And withal, she is so natural and so transparent. You see the evil that is in her, at the very moment that you are forced to admire the good. You never are impressed with the idea that she is a saint or an angel. The human is far more manifest than the divine in her composition. You must know her well before you can sound the depths of her piety. Strangers call her good and lovely. The thoughtless pronounce her a paragon of perfection. Only her friends discern in her the Christ-like. Yet even they never forget that she is a sinner, a meek, humble penitent, sitting under the shadow of the cross, with a heart full of faith, love, hope, zeal, and an ardent 'desire of and determination after a spirit of new obedience.'"

"It is all true, Roderick, all true! It never struck me before. I did not know that you were such an adept at reading characters. But I begin to suspect that you are studying Vara's character a little more faithfully than the thesis on the open page of that ponderous tome which lies before you. There, don't blush. If I was as much in favour; or rather, if any one but *you* stood in my way, I would study *her* character too."

"Pshaw, Howard, I only love her as a cousin, you know."

"'As a cousin!'"

"Well, what is so droll in that? You seem to be vastly amused."

devout meditations, and rigorous self-examination ; competent in every sense to be a missionary, and the wife of a missionary.

The sound of carriage-wheels ; the ringing of the door-bell ; bustle in the entry ; the approach of hasty footsteps. Vara cannot move. She is helpless—paralysed with intensity of emotion. The door opens ; she sees nothing, not even the swaying, almost fainting form that droops on a trembling arm. A loud scream, more of pain than joy—none could ever tell who uttered it—and the mother and the daughter, clasped convulsively in each other's arms, sink together on the sofa in speechless agony ; yes, *agony* of love, joy, and realized hope long deferred : the father, pale and nerveless, stoops to kiss the brow, drops into the nearest chair, and lifts up his voice and weeps—weeps, not merely floods of tears, as women weep, but weeps as men weep whose feelings, too long resisted, take fearful vengeance—weeps with loud piercing wails, with short, broken, heart-rending sobs, that shake his whole frame, and seem, if unsubdued, to endanger life itself.

The suffering of that excessive joy was too much for all ; it was almost as painful as the first parting. Vara and her mother were both sick the next day ; and it was many days before the latter wholly recovered from that nervous tremor, which would manifest itself again and again in hysterical fits of tears and laughter.

They were assembled in the old Granger mansion in Liberty. Kate, Charles, Matilda, Roderick, and Howard Haywood, were all with Adele Boyle.

It was painful to witness the first interview between the adopted father and the own father and mother. How conscious the former seemed of his undesert of such overpowering thanks ! How a sense of shame lurked in his heart at the half-defined suspicion that they were overgrateful ! He did not exactly comprehend it ; he really thought that he had done pretty well by their daughter, to

support her for so many years, and to educate her so handsomely; yet there was an ugly feeling underlying his self-complacency—an intruding twinge of conscience—a dim apprehension of criminal deficiency in his benevolence! He had then and there, while Mr. and Mrs. Austen grasped either hand, and warm tears of gratitude fell dripping on it, and thanks, eloquent with sincerity and love, poured from their lips; he had then and there some slight imperfect perception of the truth, that Vara had been to him all that a daughter could be, and that he had not been to her all that a father might be; and that, if *he* had spent some money on her, *she* had lavished on him what money could not buy—the light and joy, the substantial comfort and the refined happiness, a pious, prudent, sensible, cheerful, beautiful and accomplished daughter imparts to a household. But Mr. and Mrs. Austen had found in Vara all that they wished, or hoped for, and naturally regarded Mr. Stephens as the chief instrument in making her so. If sensible of the meanness of his conduct in turning her off, and violating his written engagement to regard her as his own child,—all, all was forgotten in the overflowing joy of receiving her back from his hands, pure in heart, unspotted by the world. The old man was stunned by the earnestness of their gratitude. Not so with Mrs. Stephens. She took it as a matter of course. One would have thought, from the manner in which she appropriated the thanks, that it had been the one sole object, both of her own life and of her husband's, to make Vara good and happy.

The sixteenth of January had come again, and there, in that house where cousin Granger had joined their hands in childhood, and wished that they might thus go hand in hand through life,—by Vara's own father, with the blessing of the venerable Mr. Hamilton, Vara Austen was married to Roderick Granger.

That morning Mr. Stephens put a cheque for a thousand dollars into Vara's hands; and Mrs. Stephens spared no expense or trouble on the wedding. The twofold happiness

of being rid of Vara for ever, and of gratifying an ambitious vanity for display, rendered her the most obliging and gracious of hostesses. She was in her element. All Liberty was present; many whom Vara loved, and many to whom she was indifferent; Aunt Polly was there, all smiles and courtesies; Mrs. Tim Brown, with her malicious flings at the sin of spending so much money on "a missionary's wedding;" Daniel was there, gruff and surly; and Mrs. Daniel looking sad and forlorn; and Sarah Harris was there too, so quietly cheerful, that one would never have suspected how deeply the arrow had pierced her heart, and how she had already in her youth learned to live in the contented performance of duty in a working world, insensible to the glow of a single hope or enthusiastic fancy for the world itself.

Vara's beauty never appeared so brilliant; it was fairly dazzling; for the first and only time in her life, that beauty was adorned with jewellery; her mother's diamonds shone upon her bosom and in her hair. Aunt Polly said,—and aunt Polly, good as she was, never classed Vara with things earthly,—“it seemed as if there was jist sich a glory about her as shines around the blessed ones in heaven;” but Mrs. Tim Brown said: “it was ri-diculous to see a missionary so handsome. The most sensiblest things gals with purty faces can do, is to make their fortunes with 'em, and then, with the money they got, they might send a hundred missionaries to the heatheners, if they was such 'tarnal fools. Then only to think that them missionaries their-own-selves owned them di-monds! She did believe now what her Bill had said, more nor ever!”

Those jewels, the last heir-looms of departed wealth and worldly grandeur, were never to offend again. A few days after the wedding, with the consent of all parties interested, they were sold, and the money brought by their sale, together with the thousand-dollar check, was invested; and the interest regularly appropriated to the maintenance of Aunt Polly Williams, during her natural life, in comfort and respectability.

Vara and Roderick, with Mr. and Mrs. Austen, spent the

rest of the winter in visits to relatives and friends ; visits in New York and in New England ; to the stately aunts on the Connecticut ; and to the lively Thornwells in Franklinburg, whose elastic house and expansive hospitality proved fully adequate to their accommodation ; to cousins nearly and remotely allied ; and to acquaintances new and old. Then, when the spring was sufficiently advanced, there was a tour of pleasure to Niagara and Canada, and the White Mountains and Lake George, and back again to New York, to prepare for departure to the island-home.

The Thornwells looked aghast at the idea of Vara's becoming a missionary. They regarded it as a sort of inherited insanity, transmitted through her parents. But how *such* a young man as Roderick Granger could be drawn into this wild scheme, they could not comprehend. Probably they never have understood it. It was something too much out of their line.

The dear old aunts shed tears of joy in meeting their nephew and his wife once more, and tears of grief in parting with them, as they well knew, to see their faces no more on earth. They expressed less regret at Vara's missionary intentions than she had expected. The ties of earth were loosening, they were tremulous with old age, and, though the inordinate passion of their lifetime, a fondness for pomp and style, survived, Vara observed that their thoughts and conversation turned more on the realities of the world to come. Much was Vara impressed with the conviction of their love to her, when, on parting, Aunt Hetty insisted on her accepting her gold vinaigrette, studded with real rubies, and Aunt Jane her mother-of-pearl, elaborately-carved fan ;—presents, received by Vara with painful reluctance, yet with deep gratitude, as the strongest evidences the dressy old ladies could give of the strength of their attachment. Often did she wonder how they survived the loss of these trinkets,—to her so useless, to them so valuable. Dear old ladies ! They are robed now, we may hope, in the beauties of holiness. Old black Phillis died very soon after Vara's last visit. Aunt Jane followed speedily and suddenly of an attack of pleurisy. Aunt Hetty survived five years, but never laid aside the

habiliments of mourning. Her world died with her sister. Punctilious in etiquette and dress to the last, from the force of habit, she was weaned from the love of these things, and gave her thoughts more and more to her Bible and her Maker, till calm, serene, and full of hope, she fell asleep, and was gathered to her fathers. The brocades and silks and velvets have been dispersed among the fortieth cousins, the mansion has been sold, and from the proceeds of the sale, Mr. Austen is in the possession of a little income, sufficient to procure him luxuries now, and a comfortable independence in approaching old age.

One more hasty visit to Liberty;—bidding good-bye to every familiar place and face,—one last visit to the grave covered with forget-me-nots,—one last kiss to Aunt Polly,—one last word of kindness thrown away on Mrs. Tim Brown,—one last blessing from Mr. Hamilton,—and she was gone,—gone for ever from Liberty. The last ray of light faded from the home of her adopted father,—the last beam of a loving heart had fallen on his stricken soul. The sun of his prosperity had sunk.

Eventually the extravagance of his worldly wife ruined him. He was stripped of everything; even of the wife herself. She, young and ambitious, would not accept, what her husband, in his old age and imbecility, was forced to receive, an unwelcome shelter in the house of an undutiful son. She, with her father, retreated to New-York; hired and furnished, no one knew how, an expensive house, and opened a fashionable boarding establishment; about a year afterwards, she appeared for a little while in widow's mourning, but has long since returned to her love of finery and frivolity.

Daniel, from the moment he discovered that his wife was penniless, treated her with neglect and contempt, grew irritable and penurious, dismissed the servants, and left her to do her own work. She, incapable and helpless by nature, became a slattern in her habits, lived to be the mother of a son and a daughter, who both died in infancy, and followed them to an early grave, either of a broken heart, or an over-worked body. Mrs. Tim Brown has long been established

as housekeeper. She is more of a virago than ever. Her silk dresses and gaudy bonnets, are the only "fine" things that ever go in or come out of Daniel's house. She is old and homely, but people do wonder how she affords to buy such clothes. Daniel, people say, is too "close" even to make money. He will not enlarge his store, nor renew his stock of goods, nor repair his dilapidated house. He is hardly better off than he was when he started in life, though he exacts every cent that is due to him, spends little, and gives away nothing. He is shabby in dress, and gruff and surly in manners. He has not a single friend. Good people pity him, and bad people detest him.

The clouds had gathered threateningly as if for a shower, but had broken away, and through their floating masses the sun-light fell in patches on the bosom of the beautiful bay. The good ship was one moment enveloped in the shadow, and the next brightly in the sun-beams, like the chequered feelings of regret for the present, and hope for the future, that alternately saddened and cheered the departing missionaries.

Plentiful tears had fallen in saying the last farewells. Kate Granger herself, the greatest sufferer, excited the keenest sorrow in the hearts of those who were leaving her. But her imperious spirit had bowed before the cross, and with high religious principle, she consecrated them cheerfully, prayerfully and fervently, to their work.

"See, Father ! See, Mother ! Roderick ! Oh, see !" exclaimed Vara, and, looking in the direction indicated, they saw, spanning the narrows, through which they must pass, a glorious rainbow. Many admired from the distant shore the ideal beauty and picturesque effect of the passage of that ship under the arch of that bow ; but to the breaking hearts of Kate Granger and Adele Boyle, as they lost the last trace of the objects of their affection, it spoke to faith and hope of the blessed promise, the future realization of the everlasting covenant.

" Full well assured the mission'd bark is safe,
Held in the hollow of the Almighty's hand :

(And signal Thy deliverances have been
Of these Thy messengers of peace and joy.)
From storms that loudly threaten to unfix
Islands rock-rooted in the ocean's bed,
Thou dost deliver them—and from the calm,
More dreadful than the storm, when motionless
Upon the purple deep the vessel lies
For days, for nights, illum'd by phosphor lamps.'

XXI.

Realized Hopes and Joyful Labours.

"Angels unseen, as ministering spirits went,
 When forth the chosen witnesses were sent,
 With power from high to preach, where'er they trod,
 The glorious Gospel of the blessed God.
 Good angels still conduct, from age to age,
 Salvation's heirs, on heavenly pilgrimage :
 Bright angels through mid-heaven shall hold their flight
 Till all that sit in darkness see the light ;
 Still the good tidings of great joy proclaim,
 Till every tongue confess a Saviour's name.
 Hearts, harps, and voices, in one choir shall raise
 The new, the old, th' eternal song of praise.
 May ye who *read*, with him who *wrote* this strain,
 Join in that song, and worship in that train."

VARA is "*only*" a missionary ! "*nothing but*" a missionary ! A singularly beautiful addition to the ladies in black sometimes exhibited, at religious anniversaries and like occasions, as veritable living specimens of missionaries' wives. She has married neither rank nor fortune. Her name will never be heard in fashionable life, nor read in more pretentious journals.

Vara is a "no-body" in this wide world, in the estimation of the fashionable lady ; but Vara is doing a work for this wide world, grand and glorious beyond the conception of the fashionable lady, whose brains are addled in the process of incessant incubation of balls and plays, operas and polkas, dinners and soirées, and all the fandango of a life of glitter, triviality, and inutility.

Nor are her personal endowments and mental accomplishments wasted on the desert air. She is the life of the mission circle. She has created a social atmosphere around

her, which is silently extending beyond the mission premises to every hut and hovel on her island-home. When, some generations hence, the traveller is captivated by a peculiar refinement of mind and elegance of manners in the women of this Pacific island, then can he appreciate the nature and value of that influence which Vara Granger is now exerting upon their plastic natures. The good missionaries, who are associated with her, may not understand how much they are themselves indebted to the exhilarating qualities of her beauty, grace, sparkling humour, and genial warmth of heart; but they do know that these savage southerners have manifested a susceptibility of *outward polish*, at least, which once was not suspected: the rudest and most uncouth grow gentle and polite under Vara's tuition; the women insensibly learn modesty, the men manners, and the children docility: her tact in approaching, winning the confidence, and entering into all the sympathies of these untutored, simple-minded natives, is marvellous and unsurpassed.

Even Mrs. Johnson,—for that lady with remarkable tenacity to a frail and attenuated existence, still pursues her missionary labours,—acknowledges Vara's usefulness.

"I had hoped," she said one day to Mr. Johnson, as they were on their way to the appointed rendezvous of the mission schools, which that day celebrated an annual festival, "I had hoped that Vara, brought up in a sensible and godly family, would have grown to be discreet, serious, and sober-minded. But she is just as much a child as she was the day she left the island. Would you believe it,—I actually saw her yesterday bathing in the lagoon, surrounded by native girls, shouting and dashing about in the water, herself the wildest of them all?" Mrs. Johnson sighed. "Oh, if she only felt the responsibilities of her position, if she was oppressed, as she ought to be, with the awful conviction that these poor girls, whom she encourages in their frivolity, are in the broad road to death, if she realized the necessity of being instant in season and out of season for their salvation,—she would be—"

"Unfitted, perhaps, to do the work she is doing," interposed Mr. Johnson.

His wife looked surprised; and he took up the thread of discourse which he had so unexpectedly broken.

"My dear wife," he began, "I think that in some things we have erred. We have suffered ourselves to bear a heavier burden than God ever meant to impose upon us. We have undertaken to do *His* work, as well as our own. He sent us here 'to preach His gospel.' In order to make full proof of our ministry, it is necessary that we should establish schools, publish the Bible, and good books, administer the ordinances of religion, and improve all suitable times and occasions to urge the truths of the Gospel upon the personal acceptance of individuals. All this must be done with prayerfulness, zeal, and diligence. But when we have done this, we have done all that we can. We must leave the result to God. The work of *converting* this people is *His*, not ours."

"Now it does seem to me," he resumed after a pause, "that we have entertained the idea of *converting*, as well as of instructing this people. Under this impression we have overtaxed, not only our own strength, but also *their* patience. In past years I made a resolution which I have now revoked. It was this. Here it is in my pocket-memorandum: 'Resolved, That I will never omit an opportunity of conversing with a native about his soul.' This resolution I believe has done harm both to me and to these poor people. If I left the house after a hard day's work, for the express purpose of exercise and recreation, instead of running, and shouting, and singing, and giving both mind and body relaxation, I used to be on the look out for chance opportunities to talk on serious subjects. Instead of saluting the natives I met, with some pleasant, even jocose remark, or entering into their simple pleasures, I began at once to urge upon them the solemn realities of death, judgment, and eternity. The consequence was, I never for a moment was relieved from the sense of care, anxiety, and responsibility. My own serious face and manners often damped the joyous spirits of those with whom I conversed, and I have

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sometimes observed that after meeting a man once in this way, and talking with him, he would ever after avoid me.

"You, too, my dear, have given yourself no rest. Morning, noon, and night, you have carried on your heart the burden of these precious souls. You could never participate in their most harmless enjoyments, because you could never forget that they are hastening to eternity. Much as the people love you, they seem to regard you half in fear. The loud boisterous laughter ceases when *you* enter their cabins. The children run timidly behind their mothers. And the men are very apt to slip out of sight, as if they expected a lecture or a scolding. And you yourself are depressed in spirits, feeble in body, jaded out in mind, and capable of far less labour than if you had taken matters more deliberately and cheerfully.

"Vara has started in a different way. She laughs with the parents, romps with the children, and takes her own fill of enjoyment whenever and wherever she can. The people feel that she is one of them. They are not afraid of her. They open their whole hearts to her, sure of her sympathy in the least of their trials, or of their pleasures. Yet she contrives, or rather, for there is no contrivance on her part, she is too artless,—but religious thoughts and pious sentiments mingle so naturally in all that she does and says, that she has proved herself, considering the short time she has been here, one of the most useful of our number. Not only do the children under her instruction learn faster, and the women under her supervision prove more tractable and consistent,—but every communion season attests that some have been brought to a saving knowledge of the truth by her direct instrumentality."

By this time Mr. and Mrs. Johnson had arrived at the scene of the festival. Long tables were spread in the mission church, loaded with all sorts of viands to tempt children's appetites. One after another the schools from the neighbouring stations came marching in. Each school dressed in a distinctive colour, and carrying some emblematical banner, singing with united harmony sweet hymns

as they defiled into the church, and took their places at the tables. There were five hundred altogether. One of the last to appear on the ground was Vara, surrounded by a troop of little children, too young yet to be gathered into the schools. Her bonnet had fallen from her head, her ringlets danced and her face glowed with pleasure and excitement, as she chased the little children, who were laughing, running, and tumbling along, and managed at last to bring them all up in due order at the door of the church.

There was a short blessing at the table, and then a long time for eating, and talking, and laughing; and then there were addresses delivered by Mr. Austen and Mr. Johnson, and hymns sung by the children; and all dispersed, happy and noisy, to their respective homes.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson prolonged their walk after the services in the church along the shore of the Lagoon. The sound of voices attracted them to that point where the rocks project farthest into the placid waters. Reaching the extreme end, they looked down. There sat Vara, with a handsome native boy, some ten years old, beside her. It was the son of Rutea; and Vara was talking to him of that God who made those corals grow beneath, and painted the bow that danced above them. While she spoke, the manly form of Roderick Granger stole around the rock, and, unperceived, he stood behind them. A tall and stalwart native, neatly dressed in European style—a comely matron, in a simple white frock, her face beaming with intelligence, the dark eye, once stupid, now lustrous, and the braided hair as luxuriant as when she was the wild pagan maid of Vara's early love; and, last of all, Mr. and Mrs. Austen were in turn attracted to the projecting point of the rock. The sun painted the rainbow in its brightest colours; the waters wore their softest aspect; and the gentle breeze and rippling tide made delicious accompaniment to the music of Vara's voice. "Mora," she said, "on this very spot, when I was a little girl, just your age, I taught your mother the prayer which now I have taught to you. You have learned the words, learn also to say it from your heart. Let us pray it

now. She knelt with her hand on the little head. All involuntarily knelt with her; and from their united hearts went up the petition,

Our Father,
which art in Heaven;
Hallowed be Thy name;
Thy Kingdom come;
Thy will be done, in earth,
as it is in Heaven."

T. C. Johns, Printer,
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